

The **H** *Magazine for the Christian Home*
Hearthstone



- **How Christian Is Your Christmas?**—*Willis Edwin Elliott*
- **Can the Family Study the Bible?**—*Anna Laura Gebhard*

DECEMBER, 1960 - 25c

The Magazine for the Christian Home Hearthstone

E. LEE NEAL, *Editor*

RUBY CRADDOCK, *Assistant Editor*

ANKO JANSEN, *layout*

Contents

ARTICLES

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----|
| Christmas Wonder | Frances T. Feazel | 1 |
| Bridges Between Generations | Channing M. Briggs | 4 |
| How Christian Is Your Christmas? (Article for Parents' Discussion Groups) | Willis Edwin Elliott | 8 |
| Can the Family Study the Bible? (Article for Parents' Discussion Groups) | Anna Laura Gebhard | 11 |
| Time to Take | Eileen M. Hasse | 20 |
| Chemistry of a Christmas Candle | Jessy Mae Coker | 22 |

STORIES

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----|
| Christmas Is Remembrance | Geneve Selsor | 6 |
| Story for Children The Christmas Tree | Miriam Whitney White | 14 |

FEATURES

| | | |
|--|----------------------|----|
| No Room? | Evelyn Witter | 3 |
| Know Your Hymns! | Louise D. Phillips | 10 |
| Handy Christmas Boxes | Carol Conner | 13 |
| Family Worship | | 15 |
| Biblegram | Hilda E. Allen | 21 |
| Meeting Plans for Parents' Discussion Groups | | |
| I. Our Family Christmas Calendar | Willis Edwin Elliott | 24 |
| II. Others at Christmas | Willis Edwin Elliott | 25 |
| 1. The Bible Is an Adult Book— Can We Use It with Children? | Anna Laura Gebhard | 26 |
| 2. Family Bible Study Experiences: How? | Anna Laura Gebhard | 27 |
| Family Counselor | Donald M. Maynard | 29 |
| "Hearthstone" Program Articles for 1961 | | 30 |
| Books for the Hearthside | | 31 |
| Over the Back Fence | | 32 |
| Poetry Page | Inside Back Cover | |

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Christmas and Family

Christmas is a family experience. The coming of God's Son was made possible through the family. It was a very intimate experience between God and man. We need to ponder God's outpouring love for man in that first Christmas when he gave his Son. We need the closeness of his reassuring love and concern for us today.

Just as the home provided the medium of his coming so long ago, it can and does provide the medium still. All the activities mounting up to Christmas Day can prepare the family for receiving Christ anew. *Hearthstone* has a number of articles in this issue to challenge the family in its preparation for Christmas.

Certainly, anticipation is inherent in the Christmas experience. Frances T. Feazel in "Christmas Wonder" would have the family take full advantage of the wonder and expectancy of keeping Christmas.

"How Christian Is Your Christmas?" asks Willis Edwin Elliott. Traditions observed may not be the Christian traditions. There is real need for the family to evaluate former Christmases and plan this year so that Christ is central and is put back in if he has been crowded out.

The cover illustration, reshowed below, is a very different, and interesting, treatment of the Nativity, created by Art FitzSimmons.



"Hearthstone" Program Articles for 1961 are listed on page 30.

Coming Soon: "That Your Joy May Be Full," by Mabel Niedermeyer McCaw; "The Anatomy of Family Life," by Dr. A. J. Cronin; "Understanding—the Well-Spring of Life for the Alcoholic," by Mary E. Lockhart; "Parents and Teen-agers, Growing," by Eileen M. Hasse; "Politics in the Home?" by Louise Horton; and others.

Until then,

R. C.

Christmas Wonder

by Frances T. Feazel

THE WHOLE CHRISTMAS SEASON is a time filled with its own special wonder and magic. Even though, in recent years, the weeks just before Christmas have become a particularly busy, activity-crammed, hectic period, as people bustle about in their many duties there is a sparkle in the eye and a warmth in the heart not so common at other times of year. It is only a step from the sparkle and the warmth, the magic and the wonder, to a real attitude of worship—love, awe, reverence. If we can take this step and lead our children with us, then we will really “keep Christmas.”

You may say, “Oh, of course, we go to all the Christmas services at our church, and our children

go carolling and visit shut-ins and all that sort of thing.” However, I am not thinking about organized services of worship and organized expeditions for the spreading of Christmas cheer, but rather the moments available in even the busiest family for spontaneous worship at home.

One of the first indications of the season at our house is the early appearance of some of the long-cherished Christmas decorations. The little choir-boy figures come out of hiding to stand on the mantel against a background of greens. The small wooden tree made in Sweden and ringed with bright candles takes its place on a table. The tiny Santa Claus cleverly made of yarn, given to my

daughter long ago, hangs once more in her room to remind her again not only of Christmas but of loving friends. What an opportunity, when *your* treasured decorations are all in place, to bow your head with your children and thank God for lovely things and loving homes, and to pray his blessing and help for those who have none.

If you have a wooden crèche or a three-dimensional cardboard manger scene, this is sure to occupy a prominent place somewhere in your home. Ours stands on a table until the big Christmas tree is in place and decorated. Then we move it to the floor directly in front of the tree. Each little animal, each character in the Christmas story, is carefully and lovingly put in its place, with the infant Jesus laid in the manger last of all. This is a most natural time to talk once more about the familiar story, to sing “Away in a Manger,” to thank the Father who shared his Son with mankind.

Perhaps your family likes to make a ceremony of candle lighting. Some families have a long row of candles in a window or on a mantel or buffet, lighting one each evening. Others use one large decorative candle which they relight night after night and burn for a while. Last year some friends gave us an early gift (with directions to open it at once) which proved to be a “Twelve Days of Christmas” candle with the words of the old English carol printed down the sides. We lighted it each night from Christmas to Twelfth Night and burned down one day’s length. The children became very familiar with that carol and, in fact, sang through the whole thing every night! Whatever your choice in the matter of candles, children love to light them and to watch them, and it is a fine way to illustrate to them the idea of Christ as the light of the world and the spreading of the Christian gospel by lighting one candle from another.

Whether or not children are able to carry a tune, they all like to sing Christmas carols. If your youngsters are old enough to be in school or Scouts or other organizations, you may find that they have



learned some carols that you don't know yourself. Give them a chance to sing these for the rest of the family. A softly sung carol may occasionally replace the usual grace before dinner, or older children may sing to very small ones after they are tucked into their cribs. Of course the old familiar carols are always favorites, by reason of their very familiarity, and lucky is the family with a piano and some member who can play it, for this can be the focal point for worship through music. Draw the children's attention to the meaning of the carols' words—they are so familiar that too often we sing them thoughtlessly. Ask the children to tell you or to find in the Bible that part of the biblical story which is related to each carol; the story of the wise men for "We Three Kings"; parts of Luke's account for "Away in a Manger," "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," and "O Little Town of Bethlehem" or "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear."

Children always are interested in hearing how children in other lands celebrate Christmas. If you are fortunate enough to have foreign-born friends, invite them to your home and ask them to tell you about some of their Christmas customs. If you must rely on books for your information, there

are many filled with a great variety of Christmas customs, and public libraries and librarians are wonderfully helpful. After you and your family have talked together about some of the different ways that people in other countries celebrate the birth of Christ, why not offer a simple prayer of thanks for all our friends in other lands, for Christian people throughout the world, and for those men and women through the centuries who have helped to spread the good news about Jesus. At the same time, ask God's blessing on those whose love for the Christmas Babe is the same as ours, though their ways of showing it seem strange to us.

Naturally enough, Christmas gifts loom large in children's minds in the days approaching Christmas. It has been my experience that the gifts they give are fully as exciting to children as the ones they hope to receive. The anticipation of other people's surprise and appreciation is part of the fun, as is the actual purchase or making of the gift, and its wrapping and tagging. This is the area, perhaps, where the Christmas celebration has become overly materialistic and commercial. Yet here is an opportunity to lead young minds to the realization that no matter how costly or how small, any gift we

give or receive is really only a symbol, a token of that far greater Gift from God. A child who learns early to hold and cherish this thought and its companion thought, that we give because we love, will, I think, be in little danger from the materialistic promoters of the season.

It becomes apparent that almost any of our usual Christmas activities can be centered around or can lead us into a worship experience. It isn't something which requires a lot of time or a lot of planning, but something which can grow naturally out of the things we enjoy doing at this season, creating a constant awareness of the reason we celebrate Christmas.

Probably, for most of us, one of the most logical times for a few moments of reverence comes on Christmas Eve, although too often we by-pass the opportunity. When "the stockings are hung by the chimney with care" and when the turkey for tomorrow's dinner is stuffed, and when it is too early to bring out those bulky, oddly shaped packages because the children are still prancing around in their pajamas, then is the time to gather the family around the piano or the hearth or Daddy's big chair. Perhaps an older child will read the ancient prophecy from the

(Continued on page 3)



Children in Cape Town, Africa, enjoy singing carols before a silhouetted manger and small tree.—RNS



NO ROOM?

by Evelyn Witter

It was going to be the best Christmas ever! Our teen-age Jim and grammar-school Louise were more interested in Christmas than ever before. And besides Aunt Caroline was going to make the long trip to be with us this year.

Such hurrying as we had to do. Endless shopping trips, and packages coming and going. Parties and programs, the Santa Claus parade and holiday baking to get done.

My husband and the children took over decorating the living room. There was the big evergreen before the picture window and the crèche on the children's low work table on the opposite wall. Holly and mistletoe were everywhere. Our house was a well-decorated house.

As more packages and cards arrived, they were piled around the Christmas tree; and when that space got filled, we began filling the space around the crèche. In fact, there were so many packages that they spilled over, practically obscuring everything else.

On the night before Aunt Caroline was to arrive, Louise and I tried to tidy the room. I worked around the Christmas tree; Louise, around the crèche.

Finally, she turned to me and said: "Mom, look. We have no room for the baby Jesus."

The words "no room" shocked me. Was it true that we had concentrated so much on the worldly trappings of Christmas that there was no room for our Lord here? Had I been leading myself and my

family to forget that Christmas, as we celebrate it, was to honor him and to show our love for him?

I looked across the room at my little girl. "We must never have a Christmas without the baby Jesus," I said. "Christmas is Jesus' birthday."

"I know, Mom," she said. "But when you let the crèche get all covered up, I didn't think you cared."

"But I do! I care very much!"

"So do I!" She gave a happy sigh and began piling the packages in the far corner of the room, a good distance from the crèche.

It was the best Christmas ever. It was the best because I was made to realize that we needed to admit Jesus into our hearts and into our home.

(Continued from page 2)

Book of Isaiah and his hearers will be impressed anew by the splendor of the words.

"And his name will be called
'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of
Peace.'"

This may be followed by Luke's story or, if your children are very small, perhaps a modern version written especially for them, such as

Mary Edna Lloyd's *Jesus, the Little New Baby*. A softly sung carol and a sentence or two thanking God for this night which is unique among all the nights of the year will send children off to bed in a quieter, happier, less "keyed-up" frame of mind to await Christmas Day itself.

When The Day has dawned and departed, when the toys have been played with and the guests have gone, when the phrase "Thank you

for—" has been heard many times, the family will surely want to repeat it once more, to God, for the Giver of the greatest Gift should have the greatest thanks we can offer.

A home in which God the Giver is constantly remembered and brought into the activities of Christmastime and in which the whole family joins in awareness of him truly will know the richest blessing of this happiest of seasons.

BRIDGES *between* GENERATIONS

BY CHANNING M. BRIGGS ¹

—Shelton from Monkmeier



The use of time often causes friction between parent and teen-ager. The parent sees the value in studying, whereas the teenager feels the pressure of the gang waiting. A mutual understanding helps to put both uses of time in proper perspective.

THE BRIDGES OF COMMUNICATION between parents and teen-agers may range from "rickety and risky" to "solid and safe." The bridges are important. They allow experience to guide inexperience and enthusiasm to appeal to caution. Families must guard against these bridges being collapsed by overloads of demand or burned by fires of temper.

It is a threat to these bridges that the respective outlooks of teen-agers and parents, like ships in the night, often pass silently by each other. Parents may have some preconceived notions so heavy and cumbersome as to shake the bridges. Teen-agers, striving to become significant personalities, may be so set on a course as to ignore all parental counsel thus rotting the bridges. For example, whatever a parent may say, the niceties of clean fingernails, unsmelly T-shirts, and clean ears are merely blocks to a fourteen-year-old boy's press to become a sports star. The highly sweated sweatshirt is, in the team's presence, an odor of belonging. In the presence of a sweet young thing it may be a bit nauseating, but nonetheless a badge of masculinity. He cannot appreciate his mother's sweat to get his sweatshirt into the washing machine!

In similar fashion, it is a threat to the communications bridges when the motivations of adults and teens do not mesh. Take the matter of clothes. The teen girl typically wants to dress in comely fashion. She wants to be attractive to young men. She wants to be a bit more chic than her rivals. The teen boy, wanting to be free, casual, ready-for-fun, often does his level best to discount the proprieties of pressed pants, shined shoes, and adjusted tie. The parent wants both to look well-bred. But if he goes at tempering his daughter too preachily, or at sharpening his son too noisily he may crumble the bridges of communication.

The relations between teen boys and teen girls, as it is reflected in their dress, likewise may bother parents. The gold footballs won

¹Associate General Secretary, San Francisco YMCA, San Francisco, California.

y twentieth century knights through joustings in the pigskin tague are prized pendants worn by their favored princesses. An oversized, droopy athletic sweater hanging weightily over a fragile female frame may announce that "Sue is Jack's girl" before their parents think they should be that much committed. But one misunderstood word about this will blow up a thousand bridges.

Another threat to the bridges between these two generations appears in their respective time orientations. For the teen-ager the press of the moment tends to outweigh the importance of preparing for the future. Parents may be tempted to assume that their own developmental history can be reproduced in their offspring. This can lead to a conflict between the conservative, future oriented views of the parent and the volatile immediate interests of the teen-ager. Mom says, "study," thinking of grades, academic records, college entrance requirements, depth of understanding. Sue replies, "but the gang is waiting," concerned about being with her own, sharing their talk, being alive now. The tension between Mom's view and Sue's makes bridges tremble.

Most parents would like to believe that there are reasons why communication difficulties occur. In addition they hope to discover ways and means to cope with them in effective fashion, keeping the bridges passable. What procedures can help parents and teenagers maintain communication?

Before suggesting procedures it may be well to mention some of the necessary business transacted between the two generations—business for which communications bridges are essential.

At least four needs must be met in the adolescent years if the teen-ager is to move forward to an interesting adulthood:

- (1) He must come to grips with the definition of his own identity;
- (2) He must shed his dependence upon his parents' generation;
- (3) He must accommodate himself to his own sex and to the opposite sex; and

(4) He must prepare himself for decisions on career, marriage, community responsibility. In addition he must undergird these decisions with religious and philosophical foundations.

These needs are sound supports for bridges of communication between the generations. No child becomes an adolescent merely by aging. Nor does an adolescent become an adult by existing through time. Becoming is an arduous, difficult, demanding, and challenging task. It cannot be accomplished in isolation, nor can it be brought off by the becomer alone. The becomer best becomes in relation to loving adults who have somewhat become. While searching for one's best identity, one needs to be buoyed up by supportive parents and kindred adults. He needs, and will help maintain, the communication bridges that enable him to relate to the wisdom, insight, experience, and love he finds in parents.

Two basic tacks may give us some leads to procedures for building and maintaining communications bridges.

The first tack is suggested by the fact that the development of personality is not a continuous evolution but a stumbling effort to shed old habits for new, to discontinue

childish pleasures and assume adult responsibilities. Through many ups and downs, risings, fallings, and rising against the selfish "me" orientation of demanding youth becomes the "our" orientation of giving adulthood. The autistic glorification of self, after vacillating struggle, gives way. At length one becomes able to take the role of the other and thereby to reconsider one's own indulgent demands by taking into consideration the requirements of others.

Such a process cannot take place unless, through the loving support of integrated adults, the teener is helped to overcome the temptation to regard himself as the center of his world. The regression of a fourteen-year-old when company comes and the attempt of an eighteen-year-old to get her way through tears or tantrums are but two examples of the fact that development is fragile and discontinuous. We thought such childishness had been discarded! But because development is discontinuous, the adolescent is dependent upon others.

The well-integrated adult realizes that he must assist such youngsters through the rough ups and downs of development. Christian parents love their teen-agers through the sloughs and boost them toward the peaks. They do not look for results too soon. Growth is not only slow and discontinuous. It is often invisible! Christian parents believe in it even when they can't see it. Their faith is essential to their child's becoming whole.

A second tack is opened by the teen-ager's need for some confidence in new patterns of thought and behavior. Parents must be willing to pay the price of gaining their children's confidence. The price represents a commitment without reservation, a blank check on time, reputation, and energy. The parent must stand ready to give up enough of his own life to utilize opportunities to participate in his teener's life. When the teener has confidence in the parents' interest and sincerity, the parents can lead him to confidence in new norms.

(Continued on page 30)

WILBUR



"She's pretty, all right, but can she cook?"

I SHALL NEVER FORGET the Christmas I was six. It had a poor beginning—not that we began as early in the month to celebrate as we do now. Times were hard for us for it was the early 1930's and Daddy had lost his money, and some that wasn't his, raising beans and pigs for a market which had ceased to exist.

Anyway, Christmas that year began in school. Perhaps I remember this because it was my first year in school. My older sister and brother and I walked three endless, cold, grave miles to the consolidated school nearest to our farm. About two weeks before Christmas we began painfully tracing large round Santas on construction paper, coloring these figures and pasting them on the windows in our room. Back in those days Christmas was not mobiles, pink angels, gorgeous birds, purple or blue trees, or even rednosed reindeer. It was holly wreaths, Santa Clauses, and Christmas trees that were green, just as a tree should be.

To begin with, I had lost my red crayola and who ever heard of a Santa Claus dressed in anything but a red suit? Certainly not I—so I struggled along dispiritedly, drawing Santas all white and black. Then came tryout for angels in the school pageant. There was a very busy angel and a dozen lesser angels in the pageant, and I felt sure of a place in this heavenly band, but the teacher-mother sponsors vetoed me. I was not the angelic type, in retrospect, I agree. I had a figure like a shoe box and a face to match. However, in my heart I felt like an angel.

Then the final disaster came when Mother announced there were two geese left in the barn lot and it would have to be Isabel who would lend herself for our family dinner on Christmas Day. Christmas dinner was important to Mother because the relatives came out from town and some of them usually spent the night on the farm. In tears I told mother it just couldn't be Isabel because she was my friend. Mother explained patiently at first and then with a dreadful finality that it was

Christmas



by Geneve Selsor

Isabel's turn. My brother had given his goose for Thanksgiving and there were two remaining geese, Isabel and Joseph. Mother's reasons were clear, at least to her. She would keep the goose and kill the gander. In triumph I explained that Isabel would then be saved and Joseph would go.

The gender of geese is hard to determine at birth and the fact that names and love had been given in the downy stage had never bothered me. True, Joseph did lay the eggs but that was a poor thing to hold against Isabel. Besides, for almost a year off and on, though mostly off, Isabel had worn a red cape and scarf which once belonged to my doll, Angela. All these proofs were less than circumstantial evidence to Mother. Joseph was a lady and Isabel was not.

This painful fact of life haunted me and as I brooded over my problems of love and deprivation, my disposition suffered. I could only remember that I looked like a shoe box and had nothing to hold in my arms and love. Mother suggested tartly that no one would love me if I didn't present a better face to the family. Even my father, who up to this time had been sufficient to counter all emergencies, could only put a loving, comforting arm about me and say a lot of meaningless words about love and suffering and sharing. He did not say I could keep Isabel or be an angel. Instead he ran his hand over my unbelievably straight hair and said, "To me you are an angel and when you are happy, there is a song in my heart too."

I wrote the usual letter to Santa Claus but all I could think to ask for was a red crayola and a goose named Isabel. These seemed so unimaginative that I refused to hand my letter to Miss Vera, who suddenly seemed to change from a loving teacher to a disapproving adult. She even suggested that Santa might overlook me altogether.

The pageant was on Christmas Eve and with a burden on my heart I went to see those thirteen angels in their tinsel halos and crooked wings perform. I saw them, not as angels but as my friends who were qualified by face and figure to be angels. I knew reality that night. This was no angelic band but children dressed in sheets, tinsel, and scrim wings. Even Santa was unbelievable for he was my daddy's hired man, Jim Bize, unmistakable because of his limp. I had been in the barn that very evening when Jim had twisted the ankle as he ran to shut the barn door against a persistent December wind.

I had to sit on Daddy's lap because of the crowd. His arms were about my shoulders and now and then he rubbed his rough cheek against my hair and patted my knee. I wiggled restlessly and occasionally tears came unexpectedly to my eyes.

I can never recall what that program was about and who did what. I remembered nothing clearly until we were back home and Daddy was saying quietly to me, "Hon, don't feel sorry for yourself. When you are so glum and unhappy everyone in the

is remembrance

"The final disaster came when mother announced . . . it would have to be Isabel who would lend herself for our family dinner on Christmas Day."



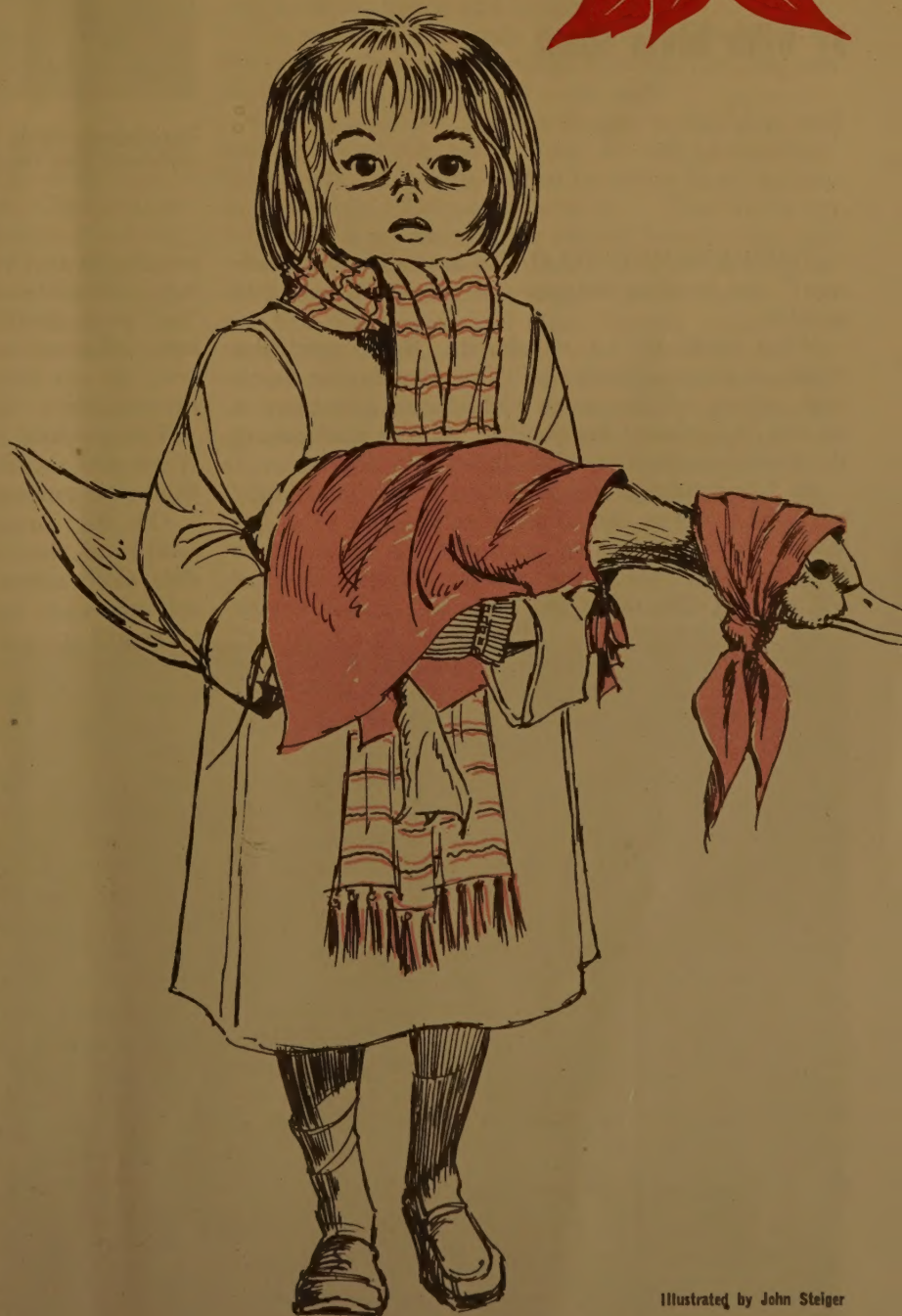
family is cross and snappish. Make the best of the season and remember you are loved even if you aren't loving." Then he and Jim went off to the barn to see about the pigs, or so I supposed, and we children and Mother went into the house.

The only warm room in the house was the kitchen and I dropped my coat and gloves on a chair and held my hands out to the still warm range.

Suddenly from the direction of the barn came the sound of bells—smaller bells than our cows wore. They sounded just like—my heart skipped a beat—just like reindeer would wear. My brother came to the doorway and listened too. My heart was beating fit to burst and my hands were suddenly damp. For some unbidden reason, my eyes filled again with tears. This was Christmas Eve and it was possible that . . . I started for the kitchen door to call Daddy but before I reached it, the door opened and there before my eyes was Santa Claus all dressed in red (I was glad it wasn't black and white) and he had a bushel basket in his hands. In that basket were presents wrapped in the still beloved red and green holly paper and behind the bumpy false face shone eyes of love. Santa didn't cavort about or tell jokes. I remember that he simply placed the basket on the blue-and-white-checked oil-cloth, waved his hands and without saying a single word, turned to leave the room.

I still stood spellbound beside the door, unable to move. Santa

(Continued on page 28)



Illustrated by John Steiger

How CHRISTIAN Is Your Christmas?

by Willis Edwin Elliott

"WE'RE GOING TO HAVE a traditional Christmas!" one bustling shopper was overheard saying to another.

What tradition? I wondered. Some particular ethnic or national Christmas? Some particular American pattern of the person's childhood (for there is no one "American Christmas")? Or one maximizing the Christian tradition with Christ at its center?

At Christmastide the Christian is not just happy but happy about something special—that God has shown his love for us by coming to us "in our own flesh and skin" (as Luther put it). Your Christmas will not say this unless you make it: It will not be Christian automatically. "Put Christ in Christmas" or be engrossed in the trimmings—these are the clear alternatives. Use Christmas for proclaiming, enriching, and deepening your faith or it will use you (and probably use you up in feverish overactivity).

Jerry's uncle made the mistake of giving the eight-year-old a whole dollar "to spend on yourself." He did, all in one afternoon—and came home with a bag of nothings and a queasy feeling in his tummy.

Thus many "celebrate" Christmas. It is the greatest gift ever given, and the long wisdom of the Church Year teaches us to spend it over a long period—from Advent Sunday (the Sunday nearest November 30; or the fourth Sunday before Christmas—a penitential period of preparation, parallel to Lent before Easter) to Twelfth Night (Jan. 6). Those who try to spend it all just before and on December 25 wind up exhausted and deflated, saying "I'm glad Christmas is over for another year."

Where Christmas Is Really Yours

Well, what can you do? No use decrying the "commercialism" of Christmas 1960. Talk to the



Decorations within the home and without can proclaim the joyfulness that the Christian feels in his heart at Christmas-time.—*Three Lions*

merchants and you will find that they have increasing qualms about it, yet feel helpless. If you are as "in" your church as you should be, you can have some influence on how it celebrates Christmas. However, the one place entirely under your control—and the only place—is your home.

Take a look at how you spent last Christmas. Were you satisfied, as a Christian? How do you think you can improve this year?

On the Sunday before Advent hold a family Christmas planning conference and list all the possible celebrations you can think of. Of course you will not want to use them all—you would end up enervated instead of elevated. You will want to be selective so that each item can minister in both richness and peace.

After father has written down the answers to, What did we do last year? and What do our friends have and do that we would like? there will still be need of study. He might say, "Now let's read a little and find out how other Christian families have their Christmas." A flood of good material is now available. Excellent is the Family Resource Book *Making Christmas Christian* (Christian Education and Pilgrim Presses, 60 cents¹), designed for just such round-the-table family planning. This exploratory reading might continue in several after-supper sessions during that week.

If you didn't calendar your last Christmas, that is the most obvious way to improve this one. It simplifies and orders your planning when you write in those big day-squares on the family's wall-calendar (purchased; or made of bakery, building, or newsprint paper).

When your list of possibilities is complete, agree

¹The author is minister of the Community Church, Morton, Illinois.

²See also *Christmas in the Home*, 1 and 2, by Glenn McRae, The Bethany Press, 50 cents each.

upon a number after first asking, What is most important in Christmas? Then calendar the special church activities of the season. (Yes, church before family: Christmas belongs first to the church, only then to the family.)

Now for the calendaring. . . .

Wait! Have we taken a good enough look at each thing we plan to use, buy, make, or do?

Christmas in Its Right Clothes

Sally, playing with her dolls, decided she would put Jimmy's clothes on Janie. The result rocked her with gaiety. If she had a Santa doll it would be equally funny to put a bathing suit on it!

How do we dress Christmas? Are the "clothes" (the "ritual" of words, things, and actions) we put on it appropriate to it, to its inner spirit?

Without ritual your Christmas cannot be Christian. In fact, it can't be at all: Christmas itself is a ritual of the Family of God, one of the sequence of rituals we call the Church Year.

In our country there was a time when folk were fined for celebrating Christmas! However, this is the basic decision: If you celebrate Christmas at all, you have accepted ritual in principle—doing, saying, and handling certain things in certain ways under certain circumstances at certain times out of ultimate concern for holiness (God-likeness). There remain the questions, How much ritual in our family life? In our family's Christmas?

There is no relation between being a rich family and having a rich family-life. There is a connection between ritual and rich family-living. The truly rich family is rich in family rituals bearing meanings

that bind the family together—private meanings that those outside the family cannot fully enter into. Such rituals develop as the family lives closely together in love, suffering, and joy. The social psychologists are certainly correct when they tell us that the family that fails to develop such rituals tends to fall apart. Our Christian heritage encourages family ritual daily (grace at meals, family prayer), weekly (Sunday worship and study), annually (the great festivals of the Church Year, especially Christmas and Easter).

"The Happy Medium"

Of course Christians do not agree on the amount of ritual desirable for living their faith. The present tendency is to avoid the extremes and make a balanced use of our whole heritage as we seek to exalt our Lord in church and family.

To strike this balance it is NOT important—as we examine possible Christmas symbols, customs, and literature (including music)—to ask:

1. *Is it visible?* The eye-danger is that man will worship what his hands make to aid his worship: the eye-prejudice forbids man to use his hands to help him worship. Let our criteria be: "God be in my eyes, and in my seeing" (an ancient benediction) and "Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love" (Frances Havergal's famous hymn). In the first Christmas, God made himself visible. Let us use the visible, even "the work of our hands," to re-present his visible Gift. In addition, let us ponder the secular competition for our eyes, the vast industry of visual advertising, almost all of it drawing our attention from the Creator to the (salable) creation.

2. *How old is it?* Antiquity adds charm and



The manger scene is one of the best mediums of calling the attention of the family and friends to what is central in Christmas.—*Three Lions*

novelty lends variety and vigor, but other norms determine whether we should use Christmas cards (a modern invention), the manger scene (early medieval teaching device), and special lights (an ancient Christian practice).

3. *Is it Catholic?* If one means by this, Is it a "universal" Christian custom? the question has some relevance. Among Christian rituals our highest respect is reserved for those practiced "everywhere at all times by everyone" (as an ancient Christian put it). If one means, Do the Roman Catholics do it? and rejects it if the answer is yes, then this is negative Protestantism, mere reaction, on a level with the politics of reaction ("If the Russians believe it, I don't"). Western Protestantism is (you and I believe) a necessarily rebellious child against Roman authority. However, Christendom is indebted to the Roman Catholic church for preserving much of its spiritual traditions. Therefore, we should not arbitrarily reject everything that the Roman church approves. When and in what Christian communion a symbol or custom originates are not valid bases for use or rejection.

4. *Is it of Christian origin?* All that lifts human life is of God. This through the centuries has been the orthodox Christian conviction. The origin of a Christmas custom neither condemns nor recommends it, though often it embellishes it with a glimpse into the human situation.

But *it IS important* to ask of a Christmas ritual:

1. Is it a bearer of the Christmas *message* and the Christian's *response*? This double norm would judge traditions of two centuries old thus: Northern Europe's tree-centered Christmas (a symbol of ambiguous meaning) is inferior to Southern Europe's manger-centered Christmas (an unambiguous, direct

re-presenting of God's mighty act of self-presentation in his Son). The message "comes through" the crèche (manger scene or Putz) so much more clearly that in the United States the crib is gradually coming to center stage, pushing the tree to one side. As for the other half of the norm, the tree is only indirectly (as a source of joy-in-general) able to bear the Christian's response to Christmas; whereas the stable is an invitation to participate in the original Christmas, to identify ourselves with the humanity surrounding the Christchild (for we are indeed of the same circle, the one adoring Church).

2. Does it communicate both the *richness* and the *simplicity* of the Christmas message? Too plain a Christmas fails to do justice to the richness of event, conviction, and emotion; but too garish a Christmas buries in tinsel the simplicity of God-become-man. (Is it the Spirit's leading that Roman Catholics are becoming simpler and Protestants richer in their public and private rituals?)

3. Does it elicit and intensify the *spirit of the season*—expectancy, openness to God's Word, readiness to respond, deep gratitude, solemn joy, restrained gaiety, holy dedication (giving)?

4. Does it encourage the earnest *participation of all*, in church and home? Does it bridge the clerical-laic distinction and the age-levels? Is it simple enough so that no special skills are required for its use?

5. How many of *the senses* does it engage? Should there be a Christmas smell—evergreen, frankincense? Christmas sights—red and green, cribs in church and home? Christmas sounds—bells, carols, "The Messiah"? Christmas tastes—Grandma's cookies? Christmas touches—the feel of the cold carolbook in the

(Continued on page 30)

KNOW YOUR HYMNS!

by Louise D. Phillips

Who wrote these favorite hymns?

Find his name in these hymns.

Place the correct letter in the blank space. Read downward.

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| J | Forgive O Lord Our Severing —ays |
| I B—w | My Forehead to t—e Dust |
| Dear Lord and Fat—er of | Mank—nd |
| O Brother Ma— | Fold to Thy Hear— Thy Brother |
| All Thin—s | Are Thine No Gif— Have We |
| | Through the N—ght of Doubt and Sorrow |
| | E |
| | Immortal Love Fo—ever Full |

The writer's name is _____.

Let me introduce him to you.

He was born in a farmhouse near Haverhill, Massachusetts. He lived from 1807 to 1892 and was known as the American Quaker poet.

A copy of Robert Burns's poems inspired him to write. He was also editor of two New England newspapers for a short period.

He wrote much of home and nature and against slavery.

(Answer—John G. Whittier)

by Anna Laura Gebbard

Can the family study the BIBLE?

Grandpa's day? Certainly few families keep it as much at the center of their living as did Grandpa. How has it changed?

The language of the Bible we read is clearer and more understandable than Grandpa's Bible was, for we read from a translation written in modern English rather than the formal English of three hundred and fifty years ago. The print is larger and the format more attractive—at least to youth. The print in Grandpa's Bible was so small he kept a magnifying glass beside it to help him decipher the letters.

Grandpa accepted on implicit faith everything in his Bible, even the portions that the doubters in his family wondered about. Today archeological discoveries and scientific research has substantiated beyond a doubt many of the difficult facts he read to us with awe from his Bible. And the tools of Bible study—Bible dictionaries, atlases, concordances, commentaries—most of which he scorned, except that he admitted they were “powerful useful in makin’ things clear to m’ class”—are now available in inexpensive editions and some are prepared for children to use.

In this day when popish authority dominates much of the world, the Bible is still the treasured authority of Protestants. It still contains the most attractive and



—RNS

GRANDPA SEGUR WOULD have scowled at such a question. “Any family worth the name of Christian *will* study the Bible,” wuold have been his ready reply.

For his Bible was his constant companion, his dependable judge of human conduct and morals, and his chief textbook. Grandpa had learned to read and spell from his Bible—and to figure, too. True, he had finished McGuffey's fourth reader in the country school and could cipher through the fourth grade number book, but all else he knew of book learning—to figure with an engineer's precision, to rear and educate through college and university a family of four, to teach a Bible class of adults for forty-five years—he had learned from the book that was literally the Book of Books to him.

I remember some of the wonderful gems of wisdom he had discovered in its pages. He had his own little black book in which he

had recorded his amazing findings. As children, we sat on the rug at his feet and copied down the facts that he had culled: he had computed the number of verses in the entire Bible, and of course, the number of chapters. He had found a verse in the Book of Kings that contained all of the letters of the alphabet except the letter *k*. He knew the exact dimensions of the Temple of Solomon and could translate them into terms that ten-year-olds could comprehend. He knew the cost of the amazing structure, too, in terms of current values. Far more important he knew the rules for right living, and though we at times rebelled at the blacks and whites of his morality, we knew that Grandpa's Bible had led him to the good life and all who lived in the shadow of his influence—his family most of all—were blessed by his knowledge of and his devotion to his Bible.

Has the old Book changed since

exciting stories in all literature—else why would Hollywood continually borrow its plots and settings for its most munificent spec-taculars?

No, the Bible has changed little since Grandpa Segur read from it in his sonorous voice. Nor has it changed since the day the “priestly father”—whom Robert Burns immortalized in “The Cotter’s Saturday Night”—led his family in the reading of the sacred word—except to be more accessible and understandable for family use.

What, then, has made the difference between the use of Grandpa’s Bible and our own? There have been some changes all right—not with the Book, but with the family. How has the family changed since Grandpa’s day?

When we think of it—divorce, juvenile delinquency, family tension, insecurity, uncertain standards—the family seems to be blown apart! We know many homes that are little more than dormitories and lunch counters, the old dependence on each other that made Grandpa’s family a cohesive and mutually supporting unit having given way to a shaky independence and freedom from family restraints. Economically, for instance, in an increasing number of families both father and mother are wage earners and the care of the children is left to grandparents, to the nursery school, or to that “built-in baby sitter”—the television set. The state has assumed ever increasing responsibility for education—and it is secular, without the Book that once was the school’s chief text. In many homes the hub of the wheel that holds all the other spokes of family life in place seems to be missing—and things fly apart! That hub which keeps all the various values and purposes in right relationship and unity is religion. The Bible is its timeless symbol and tool. When the modern family rediscovers its Bible, it will find a new sense of security, unity, direction, and usefulness.

Social scientists tell us that there are two basic functions of the family that are more important than ever in our modern society. One is the primary function of bearing

and caring for life itself. Other institutions in society may move in when the child is older, but the family has the child first, when he is most pliable and teachable. His basic attitudes and dispositions are formed by the family. Once they are formed they are the permanent equipment of his personality. His sense of security or insecurity, of friendliness toward others or hostility, is set in the family.

The other function which psychologists say is more important than ever in our modern society, they call “the affective function.” The Bible calls it *love*, the power that Jesus taught was the strongest force in the universe. The family then has the basic responsibility of fulfilling two of the deepest needs of each of its members: security—at-oneness and at-homeness—and love. We had better go to the Book that teaches that the first and great command is to love God, the creative Spirit of the universe, with heart, soul, mind, and strength, and that the second, love of neighbors as ourselves, is just as important! Grandpa was right. The family must study the Bible!

But how? Studying the Bible—even enjoying the Bible—takes effort. In our fast-paced culture most families don’t stop long enough to do anything together, unless it is something they want to do very much! The family that wants to make a place for Bible study in its daily life must *want* it. The words Jesus spoke to the crowds—perhaps about prayer—are equally true of the treasures in the Bible: “Ask and you will receive what you ask for; search, and you will find what you search for; knock, and the door will open to you.” The first requisite of family Bible study is *sincere desire*.

The second is *understanding*. The family members who open the Bible need to know what kind of a book they are approaching. They may think they are opening the covers of a book; in reality they are opening the doors of a library. It is a library that contains a record of some of the greatest wisdom of man’s experience upon earth. It holds the portrait of the greatest life that man has ever

known. His words speak on its pages; his deeds, insights, and love are reflected in its record, and the men whose lives glow with his spirit reveal their inmost thoughts in its phrases. The family must decide which book to lift from its shelves.

We are Christians. Let us start our Bible-exploring with Christ. Let us first expose our families to the Gospels (Mark is the shortest and simplest), and then look at the Old Testament—Jesus’ Bible—and the New, through his life. Like the wise men who followed the star to Bethlehem, his light will keep us on track.

Also, the family that studies the Bible must understand that it is a condensed book. Only the skeleton of its stories is given. It demands the lively imagination of a reader or, better yet where there are children, of a story teller. Its writers had so much to say in a short space! They anticipated that the readers of their words would read with eagerness and imagination. Its stories are brief—concentrated. Tell them to your little children in your own words, and don’t fear that you are changing the text when you give the story color and fulness. If you feel inadequate in telling the story, turn to some of the excellent Bible story books which are now available for every age, and use them till you learn how to clothe the sketchy outline with appropriate dress.

Another kind of understanding is demanded of the family that would study the Bible. That is an understanding of yourselves, of your own needs, and your own capacities. The little child, for instance, is not able to grasp the moral code of Moses, but he can respond to the story of the baby found in the bulrushes and to the basic injunction, “Love God.” The killing of Jesus by his enemies is an adult story, but even the littlest child in the family will understand the Jesus who asked little children to come to him and who loved them. For family study choose those portions from the Book that speak to the family needs and on the level of your understanding.

(Continued on page 28)

Handy Christmas Boxes

by Carol Conner

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE to have a colorful decorated box made just the right size and shape to fit each Christmas present you give this year? You can decorate them yourself, and you will have even more fun if you make the boxes yourself too.

The cardboard from tablet backs is fine for making little boxes. If you need a big box, you can cut pieces the size you want from the sides of empty grocery store cartons. This cardboard is harder to handle, so it is a good idea to make a small box first. Then, after you have made one box, the larger, heavier one will be easier to do.

Figure A shows a sample box. It is a small box, the size to hold a gift like a bracelet or a string of beads, lying on a layer of cotton. You might make one like the sample, if it is a size you need, or make one the same way but change the measurements.

For the box in the picture, cut two pieces 5" x 7". Draw a line 1" from each edge of one piece of cardboard. Cut out the little squares at each corner (Fig. B). Before you fold the sides of the box up, score lightly (not all the way through) along each pencil line with the tip of a knife. This will guarantee that you have square edges to your box when you bend

these pieces up to give it sides. Cut four pieces of gummed paper mailing tape about 1" x 3". If you do not have this tape, or Scotch tape, use plain pieces of



sides is the same. Then draw around the box and take it off the paper. Cut along these lines from the outside edge to the box corners. Draw lines perpendicular to these cuts, 1/2" from the box corners. Cut along these lines till you meet the other cuts. A little rectangle will be cut out of each corner.

Lay the paper on a newspaper or old wrapping paper for pasting. Smear paste on the back of the decorated paper, covering all the paper evenly but not too thickly. Be sure to get paste on the edges. If you have a little brush or sponge, you can put the paste on with that, brushing it on lengthwise and then crosswise.

Lay the lid on the paste-covered paper, inside the pencil lines you drew. Press down against the inside of the box so the paper will stick to its top. Then fold up the long sides, pressing against them so they stick. Fold the ends around the corners (See Fig. E). Fold the edges down around the inside of the box and press so that they stick. Then bring the short sides up against the box and paste their edges to the inside (Fig. F). Cover the other half of the box the same way, and let the two parts dry before putting them together.

One of your decorated, made-to-order boxes is finished, ready to make your Christmas giving more exciting.

paper with paste. Bend up the sides on the scored lines, so that the corners meet. Paste a strip of the tape or paper around each corner (Fig. C). Do the same with the other piece of cardboard. The larger one will be the lid, fitting down over the sides of the box. Both are ready now to be decorated.

To decorate them you need some sort of bright, attractive paper. Christmas gift paper from last year is good, if your family has saved some. Construction paper and wallpaper are also very good for covering boxes. Cloth will work just as well as paper. Mother may have something bright and colorful in her scrap bag to give you.

Cut the paper or cloth you want to use into two pieces, one to cover the lid and one to cover the box. Add 1/2" to each measurement of the box. In a box the size of the sample box pictured here, the pieces of cloth will be 6" x 8".

Lay the box lid in the middle of the wrong side of the decorated paper (Fig. D). Measure to be sure the margin of paper on all



The Christmas Tree

by Miriam Whitney White

FRED LOOKED UNHAPPY as he stared out of the window. "No snow or ice at all here," he said to his cousin Juliana, "and Christmas five days away."

"So what?" asked David, Fred's seven-year-old brother, "Christmas is Christmas, anyway, without snow or ice. I can't wait!" David stretched up on tiptoes, flinging his arms out with joy.

David and Fred lived just four houses from Juliana. They had come to Juliana's home to make plans for their Christmas celebration which they shared. Last year the tree was in the boys' home. This year, it would be at Juliana's.

"I've been reading a story about a farm boy who went with his father through the deep snow to the woods to cut their Christmas tree. They brought it home on a sled. *That was fun.*" Fred spoke with decision.

"We'll have fun going to the market and buying our Christmas tree." David's eyes shone as he skipped around the room.

"But getting a *live* tree is much better," Fred said. "When you're as old as I am, David, you'll know that, too."

"The one in the country wouldn't be a live tree after it was cut down," said Juliana's mother, coming into the living room from the kitchen where she was baking Christmas cookies.

Juliana turned toward her mother. Her big brown eyes, beneath her short curly bangs, were thoughtful. "We shouldn't just think about ourselves, and our tree, at Christmas time, should we, Mommie?"



Illustrated by Winifred Jewell

"No," interrupted David, "I don't. I've got presents for you and Tuffy-cat, and your kitten Purr-puss and—" Suddenly his expression changed, he spoke softly, "I know what you mean, Juliana . . . about Christmas . . . and thinking of others. It's Jesus' birthday." The room was very quiet.

Juliana spoke to her mother. For a nine-year-old girl, her expression was very thoughtful. "Why couldn't we have a live tree this Christmas, like some of those we saw in the market last year? You and Daddy talked about it then!"

"Yes, but those weren't pretty, like a live tree in the woods. They were all done up in cloth!" Fred's expression was scornful. David walked across the room to stand by Juliana.

"I think a tree that can be planted afterwards is a good idea," said Juliana's mother. "It wouldn't be tall enough to reach the

ceiling as your trees have other years, and the roots are covered with cloth as Fred said, or burlap, to keep them moist and safe. But it would be nice to think of our tree going back outdoors, alive."

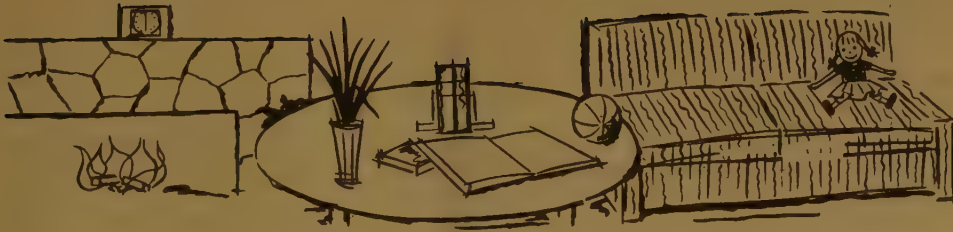
"Perhaps, after Christmas, we could give it to someone who needs a new little tree," David suggested. The three children looked at each other uncertainly, a little as if they were remembering something.

"Is it all right with you, Mommie, if we have a meeting in the kitchen, all by ourselves, to decide?" Juliana asked.

"Yes, I am sure that David's and Fred's mommie and daddy will be willing, and your daddy too, to have you children make your own choice," said her mother, smiling. "Eat some of the cookies after your meeting."

The meeting was short. David brought a plateful of cookies into the living room. Fred's sulky look had disappeared. Being the oldest, he gave the report. "We've voted

(Continued on page 28)



for parents

FAMILY WORSHIP

Christmas is a family festival—a Christian family festival. The very nature of the season makes it particularly a time when worship may take place naturally and spontaneously.

Christians should feel deep gratitude to God for the wonderful gift of his Son. When the hearts of adults are filled with praise and love for this Gift, children sense its special flavor. They will, then, be the more likely to express the same sort of love and praise. Furthermore, they will the more easily grow to understand the real meaning and message of Christmas.

Joy should characterize the Christmas season. Joy also comes to those who have the right kind of relationship with God. Worship is a part of that relationship. Children can understand this even though they do not have the words to express it. Living with persons whose lives exemplify such an attitude helps them to understand and assume similar values as they grow older.

Two Kinds of Worship

There should be both formal and informal periods of worship at this time of year. Informal worship may occur spontaneously at many times. As the family decorates the house, as surprises are planned, as cards are addressed, as gifts are lovingly wrapped in festive papers, as cookies are baked, a song or a brief "Thank you, God, for -----," can express what the moment holds of awe and reverence and of love and praise.

Periods of more formal worship may be held many times during the season. As the family listens to radio or TV programs of Christmas music, all may join in the singing. This can lead to talk of the possible inspiration for the words—many of them from the Bible. This would be the strategic and natural time to pick up the Bible and read the words. For example, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is based upon Isaiah 7:14; "While Shepherds Watched Their Flock by Night," on Luke 2:8; "Angels We Have Heard on High," "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," and "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," on Luke 2:13-14; "There's a Song in the Air!" on Matthew 2:2. Reading any of these isolated verses may create the mood or the readiness to read all the Christmas story, either Luke 2:1-20 or

Matthew 2:1-11. (See the article, "Christmas Wonder," page 1.)

This would be good preparation for following an order of worship on Christmas Day:

Christmas Praise

Leader: Come, everyone, stand up and sing
Praise to the Lord—our newborn King!

All: Sing, "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing"

Leader: Now we will tell about His birth,
And how He came to live on earth.

All: Sing, "Away in a Manger"

Leader: Bow down and let us worship Him,
Sweet little Babe of Bethlehem.

All: Sing, "O Come, All Ye Faithful"¹

A Center for Worship

There are many spots of beauty in most homes at Christmastime. Any one of them may be where the family gathers for periods of worship: the crèche, the fireplace festooned with greens and candles, the table that holds cards and messages from friends near and far, the tree laden with lights and orna-

ments beneath a star. Any of these may prepare the hearts and minds of parents and children alike to express their praise and love of God and their deepest gratitude for the Infant whose birthday we celebrate.

Materials for Worship

Some families clip and file materials that may be used in worship. These may be found in magazines, the daily newspapers, greeting cards, programs of various kinds, and many times in letters the family receives. Thus each family may have a storehouse of worship materials to use at this time of year. The four pages which follow contain resources you may add to whatever you have, if you choose, in either informal or the more formal worship with your children. Much of this is appropriate for use with all ages; where any is not, there is an indication of those for whom it may be meaningful: (K) for preschool children, (P) for those in the first three grades in public school; (J) for those in grades four through six.

¹Prepared by Ollie James Robertson.

**Theme for
December:
Christmas**

Planning for Christmas

Before Thanksgiving, most of the stores had put up their Christmas decorations. Mike, Sherry, and four-year-old Doug began to get excited!

"It is a long time until Christmas," Mother had said. "We are not going to talk about it until after Thanksgiving." And they didn't. But when the children saw the bright shiny tinsel and the bells and stars, they could not help but think about it.

On the day after Thanksgiving, Mike and Sherry did not have to go to school. When they were eating breakfast Mike said, "It is after Thanksgiving. When can we start to plan for Christmas?"

Mother smiled. "Since you have a holiday today, this would be a good time," she said. "Each of you may get paper and pencil and list those to whom you wish to give gifts. Then we can think about the gift."

"I can't write," Doug said.

"I'll help you, Doug," Mike said, and Doug smiled. Now he would have a list, too.

Soon all three children were sitting at the kitchen table with paper and pencil while Mother washed the dishes.

"How do you spell 'Grandmother'?" Sherry asked.

"May I make a suggestion?" Mother asked. "Why don't the three of you decide on one gift for Grandmother? All of you have your allowances, and if you save some money each week, you can divide the cost of the gift. That way, you can get her something nicer than each of you could get alone."

"That's fine," Mike said, and the others agreed.

"I heard her say she needed a new scarf," Doug said.

"Oh, Doug! That would be the best gift," Sherry said happily as Mike wrote 'Scarf' opposite Grandmother's name.

"Mother," Sherry said after a

silence, "I'd like to give gifts to some of the new children in my class at school."

"If you do that," Mother said, "you may not be able to give to all those you usually do."

"I've talked to Linda about it, and we thought if we didn't give gifts to one another we could help some of the migrant children feel at home here."

"That's a fine thing to do," Mother said softly.

"Linda thinks some of the other girls might like to do that, too," Sherry explained.

Mike was interested now. "If we looked through our books and toys, we might find some that are good enough to give as gifts, too."

And that is what they did. Afterward, the children always remembered this as their happiest Christmas!

Theme: Planning Surprises

A Bible Verse: "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him."—Matthew 2:2.

Thank You for Winter

We thank Thee, Lord, for winter,
For all its joys and fun,
For merry coasting on the hill
Whenever school is done.

For softly falling snowflakes
That dress the world in white,
For icy diamonds on the trees,
The long, dark, velvet night.

For happy days at Christmas,
The scent of Christmas trees,
For Christmas love within our hearts;
We thank Thee, Lord, for these.

—Dorothy Walter

JESUS, OUR FRIEND

Mabel N. McCaw

Maxine G. McCaw

Up - on a low - ly man - ger bed The Ba - by Je - sus lay; A
The ba - by grew to be a man Who was both kind and true; He

star was brightly shin - ing, Lead - ing wise men on their way
taught men to be lov - ing In the things they say and do;

With gifts of love to bring Him On that first glad Christmas Day,
He is the Friend of ev - ery one, He is my good Friend, too.

Theme: Christmas Shopping

A Bible Verse: *When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was.—Matthew 2:9.*

Prayer: Dear God, help me to remember, when I go shopping today, that I am going to buy gifts for those I love. Keep me from seeing the things I may want, and help me to think of others and not myself. Amen.

Shopping for Christmas (K)

Billy had saved some of his allowance every week so he could do his Christmas shopping. Now he and Daddy were going to the dime store to buy the presents he would give for Christmas.

Daddy had the list that Mother had written as Billy had named the things he wanted to buy.

"Crayons for Tim," Daddy read.

"That's right," Billy said, picking up a box. "Now Tim won't have to use mine."

"An eraser for Grandfather," Daddy read. Billy nodded as he found a big red eraser.

"Rubber scraper for Grandmother," Daddy read as Billy said, "When she saw Mother's she said she wanted one!"

"That's all," Daddy said.

"Mother's name isn't on the list," Billy said.

"I'll put it on," Daddy said. "What will you buy for her?"

"She said her pot holders were worn out," Billy answered.

"Fine," Daddy said. "We'll find some." And they did.

When they got home Mother said, "I've some pretty paper and ribbon. Want to wrap your gifts?"

Billy nodded, then carefully took Mother's gift from the bag. As they worked he said, "I like Christmas! Shopping for Christmas is more fun than shopping for myself!"

To Think About (P, J)

Christmas can be a very happy time; or it can be a time when you are miserable. You are the one to decide which it is to be.

Read the poem near the bottom of this page, "When Going to the Stores." Does this help you to know how to be happy, or to be miserable? If you allow yourself to think of yourself and all the things you *want*, you will be miserable.

On the other hand, if you think of ways to make your friends and loved ones happy, you will find that you are happy, too.

This poem also suggests that when you are cheerful and happy, you help to make a happy time for the person who takes you shopping.

Think about this and decide well in advance how you will feel this Christmas. This is part of your planning and your shopping. Shop for happiness!

When Going to the Stores

Dear God, I'm going to the stores today,
To look at all the toys and other things
That can be bought for Christmas. Mother says
We can't buy anything at all just yet.
But we can look and see the lovely things,
And clever things, and useful things,
And funny things they have for sale
So that we can choose wisely later on.
She says I mustn't beg for this and that.
Dear Lord, it's very hard not to be able
To spend all the money it would take
To buy a lot of things. I like them all
So much! Lord, help me not to fuss about it
But to make the trip a lot of fun,
For Mother and for me—just looking.
Help me, Lord. Amen.

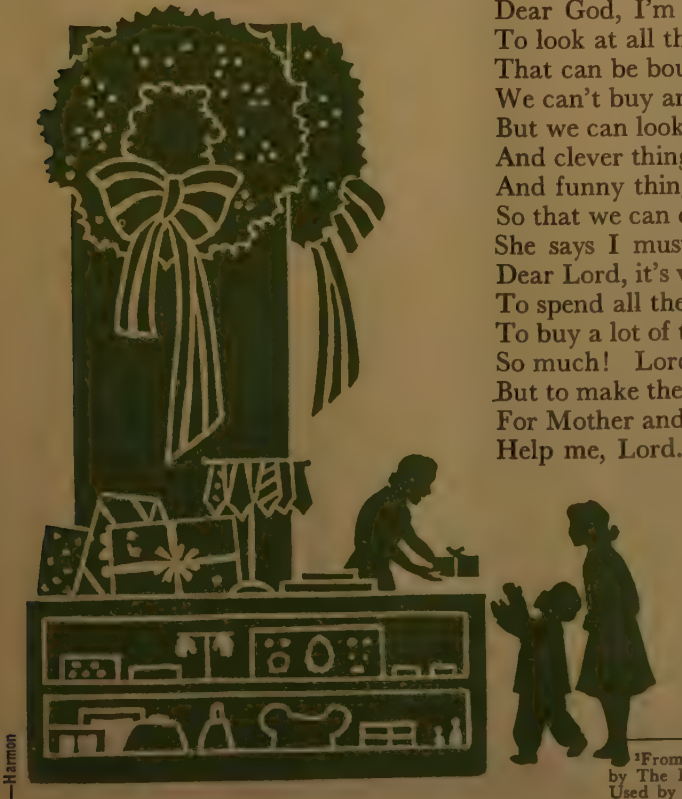
—Grace W. McGavran¹

Morning Prayer

Thank You, Lord, for a restful night,
And thank You for this morning bright.
Keep us in Your love, we pray,
All through a happy Christmas Day.

—Lee Barker

¹From *All Through the Year*, by Grace W. McGavran, copyright, 1958, by The Bethany Press. Original copyright held by The Westminster Press. Used by permission.



Delivering Gifts

All the Christmas planning had been done long ago. All the gifts had been wrapped and tagged. Now it was the day before Christmas and time to deliver gifts to friends and loved ones.

"This is a beautiful day for delivering gifts," Father said happily. "Just look at the sunshine!"

"I wish it were snow," Roger said. "How can I use the sled I'm going to get tomorrow if we don't have snow?"

"But this is Christmas Eve, and a day when we must be outside, so I'm glad for the sunshine," Father insisted with a laugh. "But," he went on, "it is cold even in the sunshine. Bundle up good before you go out!"

When the children had on their snow suits each of the girls took a pile of gifts. "These all go to Aunt Kate's house," Marilyn said.

"And these all go to Grandmother's," Lois said.

"I'll take the things to the Smiley family," Father added. "Want to come with me, Roger?"

"Sure," Roger said, and he began to sing, "There's a Song in the Air!" Father joined in the song, and soon the girls were singing, too, as they made their way down the street.

Suddenly Lois stopped singing. With shining eyes she said, "I'm glad for gifts that show others that we love them!"

—W. Henry Boller



Theme: Gifts Show Love

A Bible Verse: *When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.*—Matthew 2:10.

Prayer: Dear God, it is hard to keep from thinking about the things I'd like to get for Christmas. Help me to remember that gifts show love—my gifts to others as well as those I receive, and that I am happiest when I think about and plan for others. Amen.

Planning Surprises

Planning surprises for all of my friends
And all of my family, too,
Is one of the joys that it seems never ends,
For it brings, every year, thought anew
Of the Best Gift of all, that God's love gladly sends
To folks just like me and like you.

—Jessie B. Carlson

Snow Flakes

The snow flakes fall
Without a sound,
They spread a sheet
Upon the ground.

I feel quite sure
God sends the snow;
The quiet flakes
Have told me so.

—Florence Pedigo Jansson

Prayer for December

Dear Father, hear
Our grateful praise
For all the glad
December days.

For all the world
Made clean and white
By silent snowfall
In the night.

For warmth
And loving gifts again,
For carols of
"Good will toward men."

For church bells chiming
Near and far;
"A Child is born
Beneath a star!"

—Eleanor Hammond¹

¹From *Juniors*, copyright, 1949, by The American Baptist Publication Society. Used by permission.

Theme:

Christmas Is

Jesus' Birthday

A Bible Verse:

And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.—Matthew 2:11.



—Church-Craft from Ewing Galloway

Prayer: Thank you, God, for Jesus, born on the first Christmas. Help me always to remember that he was the first, and best, Christmas gift to all persons. Amen.

I Like Snow (K, P)

Today the snowflakes have a race
To see which one can touch my face
The first. I wonder if they know
How much I like the feel of snow,
And if they ever hear me say,
“Oh thank you, God, for snow today!”

—Belle Chapman Morrill

A Christmas Litany (P, J)

For Jesus, born on Christmas Day,
Sleeping on a bed of hay,
We thank You, God, our Father.
For carols happy children sing
Telling of our new-born King,
We thank You, God, our Father.
For love which circles round the earth
In honor of that Holy Birth,
We thank You, God, our Father.
For hearts made willing now to share
With all Your children everywhere,
We thank You, God, our Father.

Amen.

—Mabel Niedermeyer McCaw

God's
Loving Gift

Long, long years ago, God made the world. He planned for everything that people would need to live happily together. Then God planned for people to enjoy and live in the world he had made.

God wanted people to love and help one another. He wanted them to love and worship him, too. But as the years went

by, many of his people forgot all about God. They quarreled with one another as well, and the world became a very unhappy place in which to live. God was unhappy, too.

“I will guide prophets to lead my people away from the wrongs they are doing,” God must have thought to himself. “They will seek to teach my people to love and worship me again.”

But the people would not listen to the preachers who spoke to them about God and his plans for their lives. The beautiful world which God had made was still filled with wickedness and sin.

Then God thought of another plan. “I will send my Son into the world,” he said to himself. “He will be born as a baby to Mary. When he is grown he will talk to the people about my love for them. He will help them show love to one another. Those who believe and become his followers will be saved from their sins.”

So one starry night in the village of Bethlehem, the Baby Jesus was born. Angels sang the story of his birth to shepherds caring for their sheep.

“Glory to God in the highest,” they sang. “On earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!”

Wise men came from the East to find the new-born Baby. They followed a bright star which led them to the stable where Jesus lay. There they opened their bags and laid rich gifts by the side of the manger-bed.

Mary held her Baby close. She did not understand all that was to happen. She only knew that some day Jesus would become the Savior of the world. And Mary was content.

—Mabel Niedermeyer McCaw



TIME TO TAKE

by Eileen M. Hasse

Too busy to have time to share with your children?

"ARE YOU BUSY, Mommie, or mad?"

I looked down into the face of my smallest son. The question came as a slap on the face. Must mothers be either busy or "mad"?

"Why—busy, I guess," I said. It was a lame answer.

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The words of the biblical proverb ran through my mind.

"Busy or mad" was not the way I intended to rear my child. One of these days I would find time to make his childhood what I wanted it to be. I knew the time was there. I had to take it.

What about the time I save? Where did I put it? Did I accomplish more charity work for the church? Did I give of that time to my children to enrich their lives? Did I do more of the religious reading that I always dreamed of doing? "Funny thing," I told myself. "All that time just seems to slip through my fingers."

There were many timesavers in my home. An electric mixer made it possible to double and triple batches of batter. This cut down on the days I needed to spend baking. The huge freezer kept the baked goods fresh until we needed it. The vacuum cleaner made quick work of the cleaning chores. An automatic washer and dryer cut the laundry problem to nothing. I ought not to be "busy or mad" as my small son had said.

I remembered with a guilty conscience the old iron stove and the buckets of ashes my mother carried out. I remembered the pile of wood we carried to the house for winter fuel. There were the heavy black "sad-irons" and no drip-dry, wash-and-wear cottons. The kerosene lamps needed cleaning and the water was painfully pumped and heated and doled out sparingly.

For my mother, there was time for reading Bible stories to her children. There was time for walking in the woods. There was always time to answer questions. "What makes the rainbow?" She knew the answer of God's beautiful promise that he would not destroy the world again by flood.

I wanted to give my children some of those memorable experiences. Those close associations of God with the natural wonders of the world are priceless when told in a mother's tongue. I felt ashamed that I had seemed too busy for questions or Christian education that comes incidentally if you let it.

"Why, I'm not so busy," I said and I lifted my small son up to sit near my work. The other children gathered and chatted and asked questions as I hoped they would. We shared a wonderful afternoon.

Days went on before I was drawn up short again. "From the mouths of babies . . ." the lesson came again.

I missed my three-year-old. "Paul!" I called. "Paul, where

are you?"

No answer came.

"Paulie! What are you doing?"

"Being," I thought I heard him say.

I followed the sound of his voice and found him sitting in the sun on the front porch. He wore a pleasant look as he turned his face into the sunlight.

"Being?" I asked.

"Being! You never heard of just being?"

Surely a good steward of her time should take time for meditation and just "being." I must have colored as I returned to my work that afternoon.

From that day forward my work schedule was revised. There were other things besides dustpussies, dirty clothes, and cakes to bake. The time was there, I discovered. All I had to do was to take it. I took less time for preparing meals. Simpler foods, easily prepared, were appreciated as much as the time-consuming dishes I had been preparing.

I eyed my labor-saving devices and made them real time savers. I went to my housework twofisted. Dusting with two hands instead of one and ironing clothes with first one hand and then the other gave me extra time. Looking over the list of chores I did around the house I began canceling some off the list.

"Ironing dish towels?" I asked myself. "Who knows the difference?" No one! So I crossed it off as unnecessary.

Other chores were added. These were the child-training chores that were really a pleasure. "Read to the children," was added to the list as important. "Teach the children a hymn," became a must. "Teach the children a prayer," was added.

My day became more meaningful as I let Someone Else much bigger than I take my time. There were added hours to work along with the Sunday church school and other church functions.

Church and church school begin on Saturday—now that I take time to help the children with their lessons. The Sunday church school lessons become a part of

our conversation and the hub of our thoughts. These simply written lessons have reminded me that I need to do some growing in Biblical knowledge.

The picture has changed at our house. We are building sacred memories every day. I am grateful that my little boy woke me before I had wasted a lifetime of living by turning a cold, busy shoulder to the really important things. Every picnic, party, or hike has taken on a new meaning. There are lessons in nature, Christian social responsibility, and stewardship of our health and bodies.

Yet, on every side I hear mothers moan, "I haven't time." I

have! I have twenty-four hours every day, sixty minutes every hour, sixty seconds every minute. God has doled out the same amount of time in each day to every mother. I found that when I tried to give him the left-overs of the day—there was never any time left. Turning a ready ear and willing hand toward the children helps to turn the endless events of their little day into beautiful lessons and shared experiences as God intended.

"Train up a child in the way he should go . . ."; I am grateful that I have been given time to take to do this important and pleasing task.

by Hilda E. Allen

b

IBLEGRAM

Guess the words defined below and write them over their numbered dashes. Then transfer each letter to the correspondingly numbered square in the pattern. The colored squares indicate word endings.

Reading from left to right, you will find that the filled pattern will contain a selected quotation from the Bible.

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| A Gosling's mother ----- | 56 | 108 | 23 | 54 | 40 |
| B Where cowboys live ----- | 13 | 28 | 32 | 73 | 105 |
| C Motherless calf in a range herd ----- | 88 | 35 | 81 | 103 | 79 |
| D Any cat ----- | 74 | 16 | 100 | 58 | 22 |
| E Color of a coward ----- | 70 | 90 | 21 | 62 | 37 91 |
| F Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, thirty or thirty-one days ----- | 95 | 43 | 87 | 38 | 114 |
| G The rising light of morning ----- | 31 | 47 | 2 | 65 | 25 61 |
| H Fawn's mother ----- | 80 | 27 | 82 | 110 | |
| I Hunting dog ----- | 57 | 46 | 3 | 60 | 34 |
| J The husk of any fruit or seed ----- | 18 | 109 | 11 | 63 | |
| K Very angry ----- | 15 | 67 | 86 | 1 | 83 45 |
| L Name ----- | 113 | 59 | 17 | 41 | 98 |
| M Having a bad disposition ----- | 49 | 29 | 7 | 10 | 48 64 |
| N New Delhi is its capital ----- | 52 | 75 | 14 | 84 | 96 |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| O To grind the teeth together -- | 104 | 36 | 19 | 99 | 9 |
| P To set in the ground for growth | 111 | 78 | 72 | 51 | 30 |
| Q The earth and its inhabitants - | 50 | 12 | 39 | 94 | 33 |
| R Solemn promises ----- | 76 | 69 | 106 | 89 | 4 |
| S Mother's or father's sister ---- | 102 | 24 | 53 | 8 | 42 |
| T Spin around ----- | 68 | 26 | 6 | 101 | 93 |
| U Is sick ----- | 112 | 92 | 20 | 115 | |
| V Moldy ----- | 85 | 66 | 71 | 5 | 107 |
| W Close and open the eyelids quickly ----- | 77 | 55 | 44 | 97 | |

(Solution on page 30)

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 29 |
| 30 | | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 | 37 | 38 |
| | 39 | 40 | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 47 |
| 48 | | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 57 |
| 58 | | 59 | 60 | | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 66 |
| 67 | | 68 | 69 | 70 | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 76 |
| 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 | 86 |
| 87 | 88 | | 89 | 90 | | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 95 |
| 96 | 97 | 98 | | 99 | 100 | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 105 106 |
| | 107 | 108 | 109 | 110 | | 111 | 112 | 113 | 114 115 |

Chemistry of a Christmas Candle



—Cleanliness Bureau

Molding candles from petroleum wax is a popular yuletide activity. Soap or detergent mixed with a little water and whipped until thick as meringue, tinted with a vegetable coloring, and dusted with glitter transforms the candle into a glamorous Christmas decoration.

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED the chemistry of a Christmas candle? It is more than wax and flame!

It is the solidified warmth of a Holy Child's smile, a virgin mother's love, the happy laughter of children, the goodwill and peace of men. Though candles are used in every season, they seem to glow a bit brighter at Christmas, reflected in the shine of happy children's eyes.

The light of a candle is a friendly light, never harsh or cruel. It enhances beauty and hides ugliness, yet there is a magic in its rays to mellow the hatred of men, and awe the rowdy child.

Today, few candles are used purely for lighting. However, each year Americans use more than 250 million candles for decorative and religious purposes, because even the miracle of electricity can never replace the romance and beauty of candlelight.

Probably the crafty Phoenicians realized this when they originated the beeswax candles mentioned in the Bible. Tallow tapers appeared about the second century A.D., and by the 11th century Englishmen were making a sort of candle by dipping sticks into animal fat. A little later it was discovered that sper-

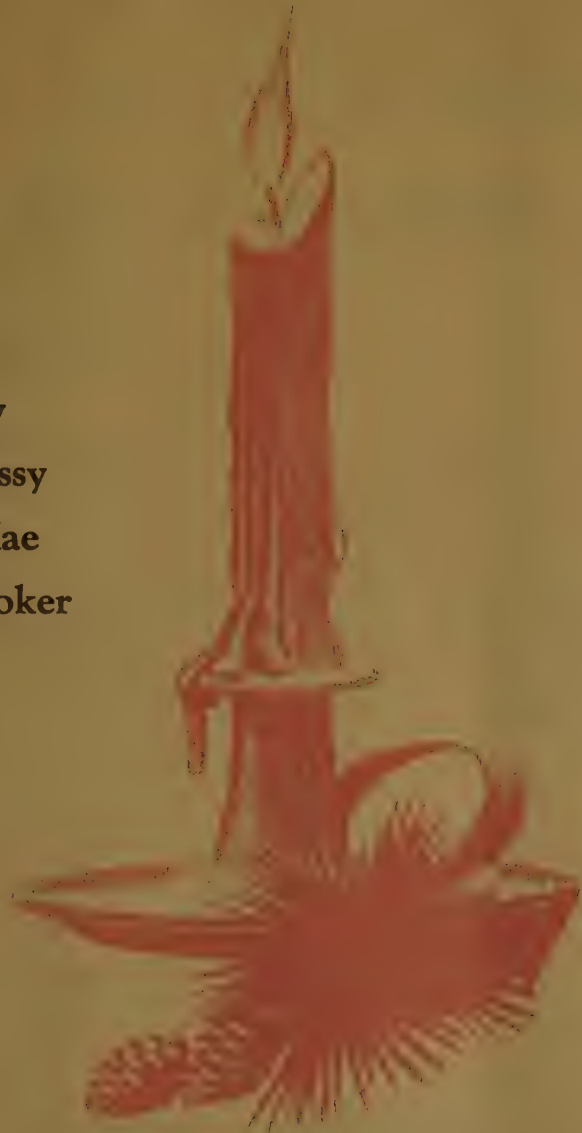
maceti from the heads of whales was a hard wax suitable for burning. This substance has continued through the centuries as the best material for fine candles.

During the infancy of America the making of candles was a common household chore. Liquid oil, melted from beef suet or mutton fat, was strained through cheesecloth. Strands of cotton yarn, called wicks, were dipped into hot tallow and allowed to cool, then dipped again. This tedious and lengthy process was repeated until the candle was of proper thickness.

Modern housewives and their families would have less time for do-it-yourself projects if they had to keep the family supply of candles replenished, as did the women in log cabins along America's frontiers in the middle 1700's. Pioneer candles were made largely from tallow and stearin, a white, pearly crystalline compound found in animal and vegetable fats.

In later colonial times candlemaking became a profitable profession, engaged in by such men as the father of Benjamin Franklin, who taught his young son the trade. Today, candle-production is big business. Dozens of hand-dipped candles are dipped at

by
Jessy
Mae
Coker



once, and huge molding machines are able to turn out 518 candles at a time. Thousands of people are employed in the candlemaking business, and Americans alone spend over 13 million dollars a year for its products.

Christmas candles are made of paraffin, petroleum wax, and stearin. Paraffin, as a part of wood tar, was discovered in 1830. It is found in peat, soft coal and shale, but most of that used today is a by-product of the petroleum industry. While superior candles are made from palm oil, tallow, or paraffin, the finest ones are made of harder wax, spermaceti.

Since beeswax is too sticky and contracts too much in cooling to be run in molds, beeswax candles are made by pouring and rolling, a process usually requiring individual handling.

In the burning of a candle, the melted fat is converted into a gas, which forms a dark cool spot around the wick. Since a candle was our first measurable light, candle power is still the standard of illuminating measurement. Candle power is determined by a standard candle seven-eighths of an inch in diameter, and burning 120 grains an hour. A 10-candle lamp is one which gives as much light as 10 of

these candles.

Holiday demands determine the shapes and sizes of candles these days. Never are they gayer than at yuletide, when miniature Santas, churches, snowmen, reindeer and Christmas trees, large and small and brightly colored, adorn our homes and shops. Replicas of candles decorate our Christmas cards, and seals, and often our streets.

Bayberry candles are traditionally associated with Christmas. Made of wax melted from the berries of bayberry shrubs, the candles give forth a pleasant, piney smell when burning. It is said that on Christmas Day

"The bayberry candle burned to the socket
Brings health to the body,
Joy to the heart
And gold to the pocket."

In recent years, candlemaking has become a popular yuletide hobby with housewives who mold petroleum wax into odd shapes, beat warm wax into a whipped-cream coating, then bespangle the finished product with artificial glitter.

Candles are an integral part of Christmas observances in many lands. In Yugoslavia, the entire family gathers, bearing lighted candles, while the head of the clan plays.

The Mexican yuletide begins with a candlelight procession through the streets nine days before Christmas. This event represents the Holy Family's quest for lodging on the birth night of Jesus.

Advent season begins in Germany four weeks before Christmas when beautiful evergreen wreaths are hung in homes and public places. Every wreath has four candles, one to be lighted each Sunday until Christmas, when all four are burning.

Throughout America the carol festival enriches our national observance of Christmas, and candlelight services are a common practice. At Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas, a unique candle service is held on Christmas Eve. A procession of carolers carrying lighted candles files down a mountain trail to a natural amphitheater, surrounded by holly trees and magnolias. On the stage tiers of evergreens resemble a giant organ, and on a bluff behind the stage are arranged tableaux based on the yuletide theme. From the hotels, streets, and surrounding cliffs thousands of people view the magnificent spectacle.

In Minnesota, Swedish celebrations begin the morning of December 13, in honor of Saint Lucia, a young Sicilian who gave her dowry to early Christians during time of persecution. Wearing a crown of candles and carrying trays of delectable Swedish pastry and coffee to the sleeping family, the oldest girl of the household, representing Saint Lucia, tiptoes through the house about three o'clock in the morning.

In all such observances the luminous glow of candles becomes more than mere incandescence. It is a symbol of that holy light which hung like a star over a Judean stable—and drew all generations of men unto it!



Our Family Christmas Calendar

by Willis

Time:

During the Sunday school hour or in the afternoon or evening of the fifth Sunday before Christmas.

Purpose

(1) If Christmas is to arrive and not just come, Christian families must prepare. (2) To sensitize to the difference between a Christian Christmas and that of the general community, especially of secular organizations (which inevitably secularize the Church Year's major celebrations). (3) To consider the materials (or "rituals") for making your Christmas more Christian. (4) To make a suggested Christmas calendar, later to be adapted to the needs of each family.

Leader Presentation

Soak yourself in a good Christmas book, such as M. R. Krythe's *All About Christmas*.¹ If your own family has never used a Christmas calendar, call them together for a very early family planning conference and whip a rough one into shape.

Invite parents to bring to the meeting for display (1) the family crèche and (2) the most significant Christmas object for the particular family (or the next most significant if the family counts its crèche the most significant). On a very large chalkboard or easel have a calendar for November 27 to January 6 squared off (12-inch squares).

How to Conduct the Meeting

(1) Have someone prepare to lead the devotion, setting his own crèche between him and the group (or in the center of the circle, if the group is small enough) and tell the story of its medieval origin. After the suggestion that each pray for wisdom to make this Christmas more Christian, all may bow for at least a full minute of silence.

(2) Distribute copies of the calendar as drawn on chalkboard or easel, and pencils. Explain the purpose of the meeting.

(3) Suggest that during the period for the reading of the article "How Christian Is Your Christmas?" each person jot in pencil on the back of the calendar any ideas he wishes to pursue, and put in the calendar squares any activities he wishes to calendar. Be sure that everyone finishes, encouraging those who finish early to use the calendar for recollecting their last year's Christmas.

(4) On another chalkboard or easel list favorite Christmas customs as parents offer them. Urge everyone to contribute to this, for it creates warm involvement and sharing.

(5) Beginning with today (which may not be convenient to show on your large calendar, but preferably should be on the hand calendar), conflate ideas—perhaps by asking someone to read what he has written during the reading period. The final result might be something like this:

"Our Family Christmas Plans, 1960"

Nov. 20: Put on Christmas recording and light red candle in table-center as family Christmas planning begins. Take inventory of all Christmas store-aways except tree-trimmings, and discuss each.

Nov. 26: Make an Advent wreath (purple for repentance, green for hope).

Nov. 27 (Advent Sunday): On the family worship center, place the bare crèche (crib, stable, and animals except sheep), accompanied with a ceremony the family plans (or use one found in a Christmas book). At supper light the first wreath-candle.

Nov. 29: First Christmas workshop. Make the greeting card and/or address greeting cards.

Dec. 1: Put a basket in the table-center, pass around 4x6 cards, and choose Scriptures, poems, stories, games, carols—twenty-four of them (one for each December suppertime before Christmas). One parent may read the possibilities, and the other parent or older children may write on each card either the material or the reference. This done, put the cards in the basket and draw out one to do that evening.

Dec. 6 & 8: Finish greeting cards and make handwork gifts.

Dec. 11 (Universal Bible Sunday): Light two wreath-candles, choric read several times (and discuss) Luke 2:1-20 or Matthew 2:1, 9b-11. Then try learning an unfamiliar carol (using a recording).

Dec. 13: Finish handwork gifts (except candles).

Dec. 15: Pour, roll, or color-dip the candles for family use and for gifts.

Dec. 18 Evergreen Sunday: As you trim the tree, name a blessing for each ornament. Begin making "bump-into" presents. Light three wreath-candles (burning, as usual, during supper).

Dec. 20: Workshop projects for your own Christmas. Begin family tape-recording (carols, prose) to

(Continued on page 30)

¹Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1954.

II Others at Christmas

Edwin Elliott

Time:

During the Sunday school hour or in afternoon or evening of Advent Sunday (Nov. 27).

Purpose

(1) Christmas is mainly getting (God's greatest Gift), but it isn't finished until our giving is in its spirit. (2) To share ways in which these families have translated Christmas joy into Christian action for others. (3) To arrive at some definite commitments, each couple to add to their own Christmas family calendar.

Leader Preparation

From recollection and reading, make a list of outstanding instances of using Christmas steam to drive the engines of Christian concern for others. Pray for a selfless centering in your Lord and his purposes this Christmas, and that you will be able to communicate your desire to get outside yourself in your Christmas thinking and planning.

Room

Display of articles symbolizing concern for others at Christmas, brought by the parents at the leader's invitation at the close of the first meeting. Large chalkboard or easel. (Optional: display of the church's Christmas audio-visuals.)

How to Conduct the Meeting

(1) Interpret (or have a parent interpret) Luke 2:9-14, noting the progression: awe, curiosity, investigating, discovery, and witnessing—that the shepherds' Christmas was not over until their Christmas joy touched the lives of others. Pass out 3x5 cards, on which invite each to write a Christmas prayer for others. You may or may not consider it wise to prime by reading a sample: "Father, you were thinking about others when you planned the first Christmas. You were thinking about us, and we thank you for sending Jesus to be our Savior and Lord. Help us to observe this Christmas by thinking about others, too . . . the postal clerk and mail carrier, for whom Christmas means more work, often burdensome . . . the schoolteacher who wants to teach Christmas more than the separation of church and state will permit . . . and those who want the tinsel only . . . and those who would rather be rid of the bother . . . all the transportation folk who must move millions to the homes of parents and

grandparents to observe Christmas. . . ." After three minutes of silence, encourage several to read what has been written.

(2) Call upon those who brought items for the display to interpret those items, at the same time inviting the rest to take notes on what impresses them as possibly useful for their own families.

(3) Ask parents to share unselfish actions of their children at Christmastide, and family experiences of reaching out to others during the season last year. The leader may write on the board or easel those experiences he believes would be stimulating to all. The list might include making crèches for shut-ins, caroling for shut-ins and relatives, after-Christmas services to the lonely (reading, baking), thinking of December 25 as the dividing-date between God's giving and our giving (so that giving of ourselves becomes the key to family living of Dec. 25 through Jan. 6, in calendaring), a daily offering for missions, an international Christmas (stressing the provenance of various symbols and customs, thinking of and praying for the peoples of those nations), writing symbol-letters (drawing and copying the interpretation of visual symbols of Christmas—see eighteen in the Whittemore pamphlet, *Symbols Relating to the Birth of Jesus*, and fifty-three in R. Rodeheaver's *Christmas Customs and Carols* (Rodeheaver Hall-Mack Co.), to those who will appreciate such a special effort to communicate the real meaning of Christmas.

(4) Add to the suggestions, using material you have come upon (as pp. 26 and 27 of *Making Christmas Christian*). Mention the church's audio-visual Christmas materials, or those of the area audio-visual library—materials that can be used in the home to center Christmas first in God and then in others.

(5) Couple-buzz (husband and wife in low voices to each other without moving from their chairs): Which of these ideas should be put in our Christmas calendar? Provide opportunity for any couple to share conclusions.

Dismissal

Christmas is, among many other things, memory-making. May your children remember that you remembered to remind them of others at Christmas . . . and always. Do not force, but make thinking of others a happy experience. Watch for moments of altruism, of openness to God and others.



I The Bible Is an Adult Book— Can We Use It with Children?

Purpose

One of the reasons frequently given by parents for failing to use the Bible in their homes is that since it is an adult book, children get little or no value from its use; in fact, they may build up negative and harmful attitudes toward it. The next remark which frequently follows the first is, "Anyway, I don't know the Bible well enough to use it intelligently with my children." This second remark may be the basic reason for laxness in using the Bible with children in the home rather than the first.

The purpose of this session is to lead parents to face sincerely the reasons why families today neglect the Bible, to discover their need for the Bible, and to lead them to desire to use it with their families.

In order to attain this purpose parents must be led to discover what kind of a book the Bible is. The article suggests that it is a whole library rather than a single book, and that books from the library should be selected for a purpose and with care.

This session should also help the parents discover what portions of the Bible are meaningful to the children of their families and should stimulate them to think about how the Bible can be used meaningfully in their own families.

Preparation for the Meeting

In preparing for the meeting, look up the hymns suggested, "Tell Me the Old, Old Story," No. 438¹; "Book of Grace and Book

of Glory," No. 439; and "Sing Them Over Again to Me," No. 442; and read them thoughtfully. Decide which you would like to use to introduce the program. List questions that come to your mind about the hymn which you decide to use.

Can you give an example of a time when the Bible has brought freedom and spread truth?

What light has the Bible shed upon our age? How would our nation be different if we did not possess the Bible?

Ask a couple or two couples to read the article and be prepared to discuss it in a conversation. An interview method might be used, with the husband questioning the wife about the article, and the wife lifting up significant ideas from it and reading paragraphs that she found especially helpful or had a question about. The article should raise several questions for group discussion.

Plan the display of Bible story books on age levels which are available to the parents from your church. Perhaps some of the books may be available at the local public library; if so, secure them for the meeting. Or your church may have a church school library with Bible story and Bible resource books available. Seek the help of your minister, church school superintendent, or church school board chairman in preparing the display. Or prepare from your denominational publishing house catalogue a list of recommended Bible books

to use with children. If you are unable to have a display, ask someone to report on the resources that are available from the publisher. You may wish to mimeograph recommended lists of books for family use.

Another helpful item for a display or a report is the list of age level objectives of the church school on the Bible. A wall chart of these objectives will help the parents see at a glance what can be accomplished with children the ages of theirs in the area of Bible study and activities. The booklet, *Enjoying the Bible at Home*,² contains such a chart. If it is not feasible to display such a listing (a tagboard poster or the blackboard could be used), ask some parent to report on the chart, explaining what the level of understanding of children in each age level is, what portions of the Bible they will most enjoy, and some family activities the family can do together that will increase their knowledge and enjoyment of the Bible.

Conducting the Meeting

Read or sing one of the hymns suggested or one about the Bible of your own choosing, asking the group to note particularly the message which the text gives. Then discuss the meaning of the hymn using the questions which you have prepared. After the discussion the group may enjoy singing the hymn.

(Continued on page 28)

¹Hymns are from *Christian Worship—A Hymnal*. Available from the publishers.

²Available from the publishers, 50 cents.



II Family Bible Study Experiences: How?

by Anna Laura Gebbard

Purpose

"But how?" is the big question that most parents have about the use of the Bible in their homes. They often hesitate to attempt any family use of the Bible because of their own feelings of inadequacy or their inability to know how to get started.

The purpose of this session is to help parents catch a vision of the values of Bible study for the family. The program should *show* them how to use the Bible meaningfully at home.

Preparation for the Meeting

In preparation for the meeting ask each couple to come prepared to relate an experience of the family's use of the Bible. It may be a story hour, the preparation or review of a Sunday school lesson, the use of the daily devotional leaflet, or a spontaneous family discussion that involved the Bible.

Ask one of your families to prepare a pantomime or role play of Robert Burns's "Cotter's Saturday Night," particularly those stanzas that describe the family's hymn-singing and use of the Bible. The hymns which were used by the "cotter's" family, judging by the hymn tunes named, were, "The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want," and "My God, How Wonderful Thou Art."

Ask another family to act out a modern family's use of the Bible. If no family group cares to dramatize for the group an experience of their own, the Gebbard book,

Our Family Worships At Home,¹ contains the record of many family discussions using the Bible as a source. Have a family prepare to act out one of the incidents in this book, or demonstrate one of the uses of the Bible suggested in *Enjoying the Bible At Home*.

Seek the help of the church school superintendent in setting up a display of the Bible units in the church school booklets used in your church school. Ask that one good unit on Bible study for each of the age levels be included. You may wish also to ask the church school superintendent or one of the age level superintendents to report on the Bible study which the children do in the church school and how the home can co-operate in making the Bible study.

Conducting the Meeting

Open the meeting with a brief recall of the previous discussion about "The Bible Is an Adult Book: Can We Use It with Children?"

Suggest that some families have found the answer to the question in their own experience. Introduce the family who are portraying "Cotter's Saturday Night" with "Here is the answer of a family two hundred years ago." (If it is not possible to find a family to portray the Robert Burns family, ask someone who can read well to present it with a reading.)

Then introduce the modern family by suggesting, "Many families today have made the dis-

covery that the strength of our nation is dedicated homes, too." (Here again, the family experience may be read from *Our Family Worships At Home* if no family is available to portray an incident.)

After the skits have been presented, ask the group to describe some of the experiences which they have had in using the Bible at home. You may want to make a problem list on the blackboard for further discussion. Questions that may be raised by the group will probably include:

How can we expect the Bible to compete with television?

How can we find time for family use of the Bible?

When is a child old enough to own and use a Bible of his own?

How can the family help him use his own Bible in meaningful ways?

How can a family solve the problem of a wide age range and interest span in using the Bible?

Ask your minister or director of Christian education to be present to serve as a resource person in helping to find answers to these questions.

Then call on the person who is ready to report on the Bible units in the church school lessons. Following the meeting allow time for the parents to examine the materials which their children use in the church school.

You may wish to conclude by having the group sing "We've a Story to Tell to the Nations."

¹Available from the publishers, \$2.50.

Christmas Is Remembrance

(Continued from page 7)

looked at my small trembling figure and with great love and compassion, suddenly bent over, put his arms about me and kissed me. "Here is a special gift just for you," he whispered, and over my head and around my neck he slipped a plain silver chain from which hung a tiny silver bell. I stood like a statue and watched Santa slip from the room out into the windy, cold blackness of the night.

So that Christmas came and went and I cannot remember now what our gifts were, who came to eat Isabel or where I slept that night. I can only remember that I was very very happy for the magic had come back to Christmas with a silver bell on a chain and a long-remembered kiss.

I've often wondered if I got a red crayola or another goose. But I'm sure the reason I do not remember these trivial things is the fact that my mind was so busy trying to remember where I had seen those eyes so full of love behind the mask on the face of Santa. I still have the silver bell on the chain. I no longer wear it because I've outgrown such childish things—I think.

The Bible Is An Adult Book— Can We Use It with Children?

(Continued from page 26)

Have the article presented by means of an interview or discussion among two or four who have read it and are prepared to raise questions which the article suggests. Record the questions on the blackboard for further group discussion. The group may have further questions to raise.

Questions that might be asked are:

Is the Bible an adult book or does it speak to persons of all ages?

What are the requirements of selecting passages from the Bible for family use?

What guidance can the average parent find in selecting meaningful passages for family use?

Is family use of the Bible sufficient for our needs as parents, or do the adults of the family need experiences with the Bible on the adult level?

How are these needs being met in our church? How can they be more adequately met?

Call for the reports on Bible story books and Bible resource books for children and on the age level objectives in Bible study for each age within the family.

You may conclude the meeting with a brief worship moment using Dr. Hayward's "I Am the Bible," from the article.

The Christmas Tree

(Continued from page 14)

to have a live tree. And we'd like to give it away afterwards. May we ask Mr. Frye if he'd like to have it planted near his window where that tree was broken down last summer?" Three pairs of eyes were shining and excited.

"That's a very nice plan," Juliana's mother replied. "We'll ask him."

Mr. Frye was an elderly man who lived across the street. He spent much of his time in a wheel chair.

When asked, Mr. Frye said, "I can't think of anything nicer than a real Christmas tree growing by my window." The children had a lot of fun going with their parents to pick out their live tree.

Christmas morning, Mr. Frye was wheeled across the street to see the tree. "I'm glad there isn't any snow or ice for Mr. Frye's chair to slide on," Fred said.

The tree was beautiful from the star and angels at the top to the crèche at the bottom, and the white cloth sparkling like snow, which covered the burlap. Mr. Frye and the children sang Christmas carols before the gifts were taken from the tree. Juliana got a doll to add to her lovely family of dolls. She looked like a little girl about to cry, but a squeeze brought a jolly, toothy grin. David had asked for "a truck with mudguards, wide ones." Fred had a big red "bike." Mr. Frye thanked Juliana for his gift, a calendar. She had painted a little green tree on January 2, the day he was to have their Christmas tree.

January second came two days before vacation ended. Juliana's daddy said, "I have the hole dug and ready in Mr. Frye's yard for the tree. We'll take off the Christmas decorations today, and have the tree-planting." David and Fred's mommie and daddy came over to help and brought some bird food to hang on the tree after it was planted.

The heavy little tree with the roots still moist in the burlap was placed in Fred's wagon and drawn across the street. No one needed to say, "Be careful!" With Juliana and David pushing and Fred pulling, the bulky load never tipped once. Mr. Frye was watching and smiling from his window. "Throw a few shovelsful in for me," he called.

The children and their four parents helped in the planting. After the last shovel of earth was packed around the tree, Fred, Juliana, and David joined hands, and circling the tree, sang,

"Little tree, little tree,
Grow now for you and me,
But grow the most for Mr. Frye,
Grow lovely, strong, and high."

Mr. Frye clapped and clapped his hands, shouting, "Thank you, thank you." As the children walked back across the street to their homes, five

Can the Family Study the Bible?

(Continued from page 12)

Finally, the family that wants to study the Bible can find adequate guidance. The church school lesson booklets of your children and your own point the way. They will suggest resources that are dependable and methods of Bible study that are rewarding. Study-books written on the adult level will give you insights into explaining the Bible to less mature members of the family. Daily devotional helps suggest a passage for reading and meditation and give a brief, helpful commentary. Your minister is a ready resource. His training has equipped him to be particularly helpful to you, if you will but express an interest. Sample the literature about the Bible, and then begin enjoying it together.

Several years ago, in his heart of hearts, Dr. Percy Hayward heard the Bible speak. This is what it said:

I am the Bible.

I am a message to childhood, a challenge to youth, and a strength to maturity.

I came out of the past.

I have always been alive in the throbbing present.

I was fused into existence in the hot forge of human experience—where hearts are sensitive and where God can best speak to mankind.

I have through all the centuries challenged men when their souls were absorbed in the murky swamps of life's low levels.

I have constantly lifted their eyes to the sunlit summits where prayer and faith work their magic spell upon the soul.

Across my pages march the spiritual masters of the centuries and in me they still speak.

Through my printed page alone there looks out the wistful face of the One who has completely redeemed the whole life of humanity.

I have lost much of my power in the world because teachers have failed to interpret me aright to children and youth.

I move onward to capture the oncoming generation on the wings of teachers like you.

You are my last and only chance to be read aright by the world of tomorrow. I am the Bible.—Percy R. Hayward¹

(See meeting plans on pages 26, 27.)

¹Used by permission of the author.

sparrows that had been watching from a near-by roof flew to the food-decorated tree, hopped about and twittered as if to say, "Thank you," too.

Putting a finger on her lips so that no one would speak loud enough to frighten the birds, Juliana said happily, "Today is almost as nice as Christmas."

"I know why!" David answered.

"And so do I," said Fred.



family Counselor

How Should Parents Explain Death to Children?

RECENTLY OUR thirteen-month-old Carol died following a brain operation. Her death was quite sudden and of course a shock to us. We have two other girls—seven and one-half, and four and one-half. They have been taught that God is a spirit. Too, they know that Carol's body was just a house she lived in and that now he has left that house and gone to live with God. We think they have come through the experience beautifully. To such questions as, "Who will rock Carol? Is there a Sunday school in heaven? Will God give Carol her bottle? Are our two kitty cats with Carol [we do not think so]? Is Carol's head all right? How do we get to heaven?" we have answered: "God will see that Carol has everything she needs to keep happy with. If she needs to be rocked and fed, we are sure that he will see that it gets done. We do not know much about heaven except it is a wonderful place to be and God is there to take care of people. He can help them more than mothers and fathers and sisters."

Can you suggest some reading materials both for the children and for us? Would you make some suggestions as to how we might better explain death to the children? We realize the impressions they get now will be lifelong. There seems to be no fear of death present. The children are most interested in the baby's Memorial Fund. There were enough flowers to cover the grave, and the children enjoyed them. We explained to them that flowers die in a few days, but that the money

which might have been spent for flowers will help someone; perhaps several babies whose condition is similar to Carol's. They are making personal contributions from their allowances. Though we dreaded telling the children Carol had died, they have been a source of comfort and consolation to us. They have given Carol's home in heaven a personal touch.

LET ME THANK YOU for your description of how you handled the matter of death with your children. It seems to me you dealt with it in a superb fashion, and the evidence of your success is to be found in the fact that the children do not seem to fear death.

From time to time questions come to this department concerning ways of teaching children about death, and how to answer their questions about heaven. For all those who have asked these questions I would commend your experience as being an unusually fine illustration of what to do when death comes into the family. Even though your children may not have entirely grasped the concept of God as a spirit, they evidently were able to get some meaning out of the thought that one's body is just the house in which one lives, and that at death the real person, or the spirit, leaves the body.

I am sure you realize, however, that although the explanation you try to give at such a time is important, the verbal explanations are not nearly as significant as the

attitudes of the parents. Children feel toward death much as do their parents. If the parents do not try to hide entirely their grief, but at the same time reveal their faith in the continued welfare of the one who has gone, and their faith in God, as you did, they give their children a foundation for a Christian attitude toward death.

Let me express appreciation, too, for the way in which you handled the specific questions of your children, such questions as "Who will rock Carol?" It is to be expected that children will think in concrete, rather than in abstract, terms. You were very wise in not trying to show them that their questions were not pertinent inasmuch as you believe it is the spiritual nature of a person that survives. Rather you accepted the questions as of real concern to the children. You admitted that we do not know much about heaven, but that you are sure that God will see to it that Carol has everything she needs with which to be happy. You could not have handled the situation better.

Tell Me About Heaven, by Mary Alice Jones,¹ is a particularly helpful book. And you and your husband would find helpful the pamphlet *Interpreting Death to Children*, by Helen H. and Lewis J. Sherrill.² See also the reprints of "Interpreting Death to Children," May, 1960, *The Bethany Guide*, \$2 per 100 copies.

¹Rand McNally, \$2.50.

²National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, N. Y., 5 cents.

Donald M. Maynard

"Hearthstone's" Program Articles for 1961

The following is a list of article topics projected for 1961. The titles are subject to change but are reliable for general planning.

- January—God As Father
Understanding Our Pastor's Role
- February—Jesus As Son
Christian Insights for Brotherhood
- March—Your Church and Your Family
Your Family in the Church
- April—The Living Word in Family Life
Preparing for Family Crises
- May—Getting Along with Others
Your Family Without You
- June—All Families—of One
Keeping Up with the Times
- July—Parents Are People, Too!
Questions Teen-agers Ask
- August—Aloneness and Togetherness in the Family
Being a Family Is Fun
- September—Who Makes the Family's Laws
Making Vocations Christian
- October—Faith and Family Health
Our Aging Parents and Changing Patterns
- November—Stewardship Is a Family Affair
The Family's Stake in World Peace
- December—Varieties of December Celebrations
Try These This Christmas

Each study article will include guides for two meetings. These articles will be usable for parent discussion groups, individual study, church school classes, midweek study groups, family nights and other meetings.

Biblegram Solution

(Biblegram on page 21)

SOLUTION: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov. 3: 5-6).

The Words

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| A Goose | L Title |
| B Ranch | M Ornery |
| C Dogie | N India |
| D Kitty | O Gnash |
| E Yellow | P Plant |
| F Month | Q World |
| G Aurora | R Oaths |
| H Deer | S Aunt |
| I Hound | T Whirl |
| J Hull | U Ails |
| K Wrath | V Musty |
| W Wink | |

NO TIME OF YEAR FOR TB.
Is there ever a right time? Of course not. But Christmas, more than any other season, should be a time of glowing good spirits, health and happiness. In the fight against TB, it can at least be a time of hope—when millions of Americans help by using Christmas Seals. Answer your Christmas Seal letter today.



Bridges Between Generations

(Continued from page 5)

Unless the interaction between parent and teen-ager can elicit confidence the chances are that their communication bridges will totter. Without confidence, why should the adolescent cast away old habits like getting all his lesson answers from dad for the more difficult practice of reading, studying, thinking things out? For a clue, watch the teacher at the swimming pool. The child is sure the water will not support him. The teacher suggests he try to float while holding his breath. Once this is accomplished the child presses on for more difficult maneuvers—diving! What happened? The unsure child, unable to cope by himself with the unknown, has slowly begun to know, led by an adult in whom he had confidence. With support he will continue to achieve.

The teen-ager is peculiarly in a stage of becoming. Christian parents should constitute an image of the quality of personhood he is growing toward. He needs to be able to make contact with that image. He needs all the bridges of communication that can be kept open between himself and his parents.

I. Our Family Christmas Calendar

(Continued from page 24)

send to relatives and friends after Christmas.

Dec. 22 Cookie Night: Gifts go under the tree.

Dec. 24: At supper add Mary and Joseph to the crèche. 7 P.M. Christmas Eve candlelight Communion at the church. Before opening some presents (in rotation from the youngest), have home Christmas Eve worship. For its signed-for half-hour prayer-vigil the family walks to the church. At midnight, have a worship service while adding the Christchild to the manger scene. (Each member of the family lights a candle before the crib.)

Dec. 25: Service of completing the crèche. Open remaining presents. Caroling (at home and for others) after lunch and supper. At supper, add a white ribbon (pure revelation) to the wreath and light all four candles. Drive to see the lights.

Dec. 27, 29, Jan. 2, 4: Have guests for dinner.

Jan. 6 Twelfth Night: Community or family tree-burning (or set up in yard for bird-feeder). Family conference to evaluate, and plan for next Christmas.

Each supper during the whole season provides a time for greeting card reading and hanging of cards read from bowl of unopened cards.

Dismissal:

Encourage each couple (1) to hold their planning conference and (2) to come to next Sunday's meeting which will emphasize the true Christmas result: "Others . . . at Christmas."

How Christian Is Your Christmas?

(Continued from page 10)

hand of the caroler? As we use every opportunity, should we not also use every sense to proclaim the Incarnation season? (Roman Catholics have overemphasized the eye and Protestants the ear, but we are now learning to let each sense praise God according to its own measure.)

Make no mistake: What rhythm is to nature, ritual is to human life. All significant human living involves a spine of ritual. The question is, Will it be Christian? Demagogues (Stalin, Hitler, Mao) know that only the ritually disciplined are strong. Christians knew it long before, but some of them have abused it in the interest of priestcraft and others have, in reaction, rejected and then forgotten it.

For celebrating Christmas you face a mountain of various possibilities. Set aside prejudice and partiality as together your family prayerfully, intelligently seeks to make its Christmas more Christian.

(See meeting plans on pages 24, 25)

Books for the Hearthside

• For Young People •

Youth Talks with God (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959, 54 pages, \$1.50) is a book of prayers that will be helpful to young people in dealing with daily experiences. A subject index is provided so that prayers of various subjects may be readily found. In this way it is hoped that a young person may be stimulated to say the prayer that he cannot always find the words to express in his own way.

A helpful book for teen-agers before the wedding vows are said is **From Teens to Marriage** (Concordia Publishing House, 1959, 112 pages, \$1.95). The author, Reuben D. Behlmer, discusses the physical and psychological problems unique to the teen-ager along with the implications of Christian ethics and Christian morality. In a rather concise, personal manner, he helps the young person to better understand himself and his peers in boy-and-girl relationships. Among the topics dealt with are: heredity, personality, dating, love, engagement, mixed marriages, honeymoon, and what married life means.

• For Youth Leaders •

Another book giving the Christian approach to sex education is **Fit to Be Tied** (The Seabury Press, 1960, 124 pages, paper \$1.75) written by a minister, Charles E. Batten, and an M.D., Donald E. McLean. Rather than for individual reading, this book is intended for use by church youth groups for a period of four to six weeks' study on the problems of relationship to members of the opposite sex. The sessions deal with (1) Human Reproduction; (2) What Does It Mean to Be Popular? (3) The Doctors and the Questions; (4) Tying the Knot; (5) And They Lived Happily Guidance is given for each session so that a course of this type might be offered during the regular youth meetings or at a special time selected by the youth group.

• For Children •

The world of animals has held a fascination for many persons. **An Edge**

of the Forest, by Agnes Smith (The Viking Press, 1959, 192 pages, \$3.) is the strange story of a black lamb and its experiences when, its mother being killed by a shepherd dog suddenly gone mad, the lamb wanders into the forest. How it is supplied with food, protected by a black leopardess, plays with young deer, and finally returns to the farm, make a very interesting story. Children who love animals will enjoy this book.

Lovers of poetry, both children and adults, will enjoy **You Come Too**, by Robert Frost (Henry Holt and Co., 1959, 94 pages, \$3). The poems in this volume have been chosen by the poet for young readers. The selections have wide variety and will instruct, amuse, and gentle their readers. Reading these verses, as the poet himself once said, will be "little voyages of discovery." The wood engravings by Thomas W. Nason add to the attractiveness of the book.

God Made This Lovely, Lovely World, by Kathryn Blackburn Peck (The Warner Press, unpagged, 50¢) combines short stories, poems, and Bible verses into a charming book for children. While it is about things children are interested in, the development gives the material a devotional aspect. The illustrations by Lilli Mathews add to the book's attractiveness.

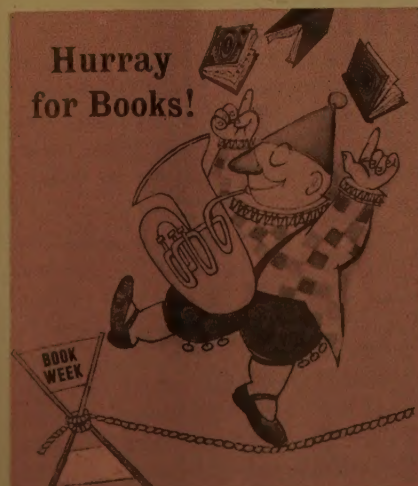
• For Adults •

Christmas at Monticello (Longmans, Green and Company, Inc., 1959, 61

pages, \$2.75) celebrates Thomas Jefferson's return to private life. Jefferson, who had written the Declaration of Independence, had such a popular following that people would bring their families, traveling miles and miles to Monticello just to look at him. Such uninvited but welcome visitors brought on mild problems such as a strain to finance food and provide beds for thirty-one persons in one evening, and have the washwoman launder and dry fifty sheets before the evening of the next day. Thus, the warm, appreciative approach of the author, Helen Topping Miller, makes this phase of Jefferson's life very appealing.

One might say that Jack Finegan's new book entitled, **Space, Atoms, and God** (The Bethany Press, 1959, 159 pages, \$3) is an aid for the Christian to get in orbit with the nuclear-space age. Our age has brought a very real awakening to the possibilities of utter destruction. Throughout history, though, each age has had its fears to deal with and to each in turn, the fears were very real and possibly as devastating as our fears are today. Here, then, is a book that provides assurances as it deals with (1) atomic power and space travel, and considers their implications in regard to Christian faith; (2) the biblical understanding of the old age and the new age and where it is that we now stand in relation to both; (3) the nature of God and his connection with the world of atoms and space; and (4) the ethical task of the Christian.

From the pen of Captain Paul L. Briand, Jr. comes the **Daughter of the Sky** (Duell, Sloan and Pearce, Inc., 1960, 230 pages, 3.95), the story of Amelia Earhart. This is the first biography to include an explanation of the mystery of her sudden disappearance and death. The *Friendship* flight provided the first real excitement of the heroine's adventures. Yet for her, it was just "a grand experience, . . . all I did was lie on my tummy and take pictures of the clouds. We didn't see much of the ocean. Bill did all the flying—had to. I was just baggage, like a sack of potatoes." A readiness for the great solos to follow was being established.





Over the Back Fence

Is Your Family Safety Conscious?

On a blustery winter day in New England, Marilyn Moore edged close to the gas stove in the kitchen of her home—too close. Flame from one of the gas jets suddenly set her clothing on fire. Marilyn could have panicked—screaming and running and thus fanning the flames. Instead she quickly wrapped herself in a throw rug, rolled on the floor, and smothered the flames. She was just ten years old.

Her mother, grateful that Marilyn had escaped near tragedy and amazed at her presence of mind, asked the child how she had known what to do.

Marilyn replied that she had seen the fire-smothering technique demonstrated in a safety movie shown a few days before at her school.

This is one of 17 safety films available free for showing in churches, schools, and civic groups. Why not use them on Family Nights at your church to help your family and others become more safety conscious? The 1960 film, "To See Ourselves," gives modern motorists a disconcerting look at themselves.

Write to Information and Education Department, Aetna Casualty and Surety Co., Hartford 15, Conn., for information about these safety films.

What Books Shall I Get My Children?

Is this your question as you face the opportunity that Christmas offers you? Books are among the best gifts parents can give their children. The question is, What are the best books?

You still have time to write an airmail letter to The Children's Book Council, Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y., asking them for a copy of their booklet entitled "Aide to Choosing Books for Your Children," 1960-1961. This will give you a complete listing of different aids to

help you select books, and will cost you only five cents.

If you want something really quick write to the New York Public Library for their listing, "Children's Books Suggested as Holiday Gifts." The address is Fifth Avenue at 42nd St., New York 18; the cost is 25 cents.

If you have access to a good library in your locality, have a good talk with the librarian.

Let's promote more and better reading at home for our children, yes, for the whole family!

Peace on Earth!

No matter what version of the Bible you use, there is something almost ironic about the angelic song, "Peace on earth, good will to men" (or, "among men of good will," or, "among men with whom he is pleased"). As this is written (August 1) the cry of the prophet seems more realistic, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."

Ironic or not, men everywhere are wistfully longing for some assurance that peace is possible, even in this world of conflicting interests and ideologies. More and more it is becoming evident that governments alone will be unable to achieve a stable peace.

Peace is everyone's business and is possible only if men everywhere become more informed about and committed to it. Perhaps the first step is to become more informed; at any rate it is an early step.

Certainly parents have a stake in this matter; it is their children, their homes, their countries, which will form the raw stuff of conflict if it ever should come. Parents must become informed.

For brief, informative, authoritative booklets write Richard C. Rodgers, M.D., 3014 Estrella Street, Tampa 9, Fla., asking for their kit of five booklets on the subject "Threat of Nuclear Warfare Extinction." These might well be used as a basis of discussion in your parents' groups in the church as well as for your own reading.

Poetry Page

We Heard the Bells

The chimes that ring from the ivied tower
Of the Old Stone Church in Hopkinton
Were pealing out the old familiar carols.

We opened wide our door
And all looked out and upward toward the starlit sky.
We listened, silent for a time when Suzanne said,
"The chimes—they ring so strange,
So wild tonight—and yet so sweet."
"And listen, father, how they oft repeat
The same refrain," John Mark declared,
"Of 'Peace on earth, good will to men!'
'Tis like the poem Longfellow wrote.
We learned the words at school this week:

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of 'Peace on earth, good will to men!'

The fourth verse sounds as if it were written for today
As well as eighteen sixty-three:

And in despair I bowed my head;
'There is no peace on earth,' I said,
'For hate is strong
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!'



"You're right, my son," their father said,
"Those words of dark despair and doubt
Were oft expressed in those sad days
When Civil War had plunged our nation
Deep in the black abyss of fear and hate.
This thought is often heard these days
Wherever faithless folk are gathered,
But tell us more of what the poet wrote."
And John Mark said,

"The lines I like the best are these:
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
'God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!'"

"Yes, this is the faith the well-loved poet
Gave those who read his poem that Christmas long ago,"
Their father then replied,
"'Tis good you brought it to our minds
This year when hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men!'"

It may have been the wind just then,
But as we listened, thoughtful, still,
The bells pealed louder and more deep.
We bowed our heads, and John Mark led us
While we said,

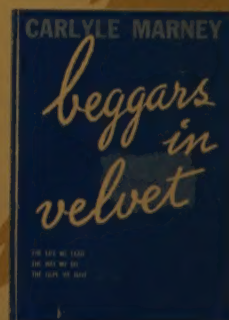
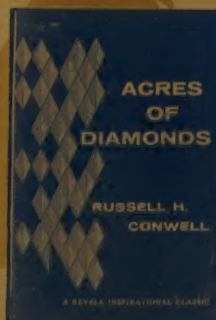
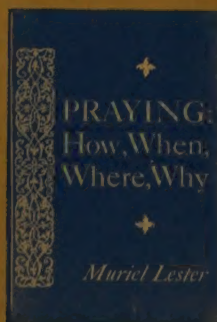
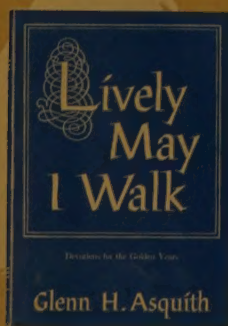
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The wrong shall fail,
The right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men!'"

This is the truth we pray
The chiming bells will bring to you
This Christmastide.
And thus with hope and faith renewed
Your hearts may be a Bethlehem in which
His Spirit lives.

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